ȘERBAN TOADER

THE SEEKERS OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

Dialogues and a Study

on Asian Spiritual Disciplines

Practiced in Romania

2025

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BUCHAREST

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This volume is dedicated to those who advance

in the twilight of religious and political dogmatism,

choosing a path that is theirs alone –

yet in solidarity and freedom with that of others.

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“A Spiritual Seeker from Romania. The Formative Years – from Sci-Fi Readings to Internal Alchemy”

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PREFACE

I met G. ten years ago, after receiving a phone call from him and inviting him to the "Sergiu Al-George" Institute of Oriental Studies for a talk. Initially, with a dose of caution, as I did not wish to meet fantasmatic mystics. With him, however, it was one of the important meetings of my life, and out of mutual appreciation, we decided from the very start on this exchange: I would teach him the Chinese language, and he would support me in conducting research about his spiritual pursuits.

In 2012, I began the series of recorded interviews with him, some at rather long intervals, so that only in 2014 did I consider that the discussions on the topics I proposed could conclude and the stage of transcribing and organizing the material could follow - approximately seven hours of audio material.

Beyond the recorded interviews, the material necessary for the study was enriched with planned or spontaneous sessions of noted interviews, but also with information obtained during three practice and treatment trips to China. Here I wish to express not only the joy of having met G. and his wife but also my gratitude to them for the chance to meet two of China's important masters today: the Daoist Wang Liping and the Buddhist Jiang Feng (d. 2016).

This book is the third fruit of this research, extended over a long period. First, I participated in May 2017 in the 11th edition of the Conference on Daoist Studies, with the theme Creativity and Diversity, held at Nanterre University. At that time, the study itself was not finished, and its publication took place in February 2018, in the well-known Journal of Daoist Studies, which appears annually in the United States. The article is titled "A Romanian Spiritual Seeker's Growth: From Sci-Fi Readings to Neidan." I thus thank Professor Livia Kohn for her trust and for the chance to be close to the international circuit of Daoist studies since 2007.

Regarding the mentioned article, I considered that a simplified version could be useful in this volume, but I renounced citations and some information, opting for the formula of a summary, which I placed at the end of the volume.

But why do I invite you to read this book?

I invite you to read it not only for the information provided by reading a unique biography but also for G.'s talent as a storyteller. Thanks to this quality, I felt fully motivated during the interviews and field research, and I hope I was, in turn, an inspired "provocateur."

It is a useful read not only for those interested in the Chinese practices of Qigong and Neidan (Internal Alchemy). A good part of the story also lingers sufficiently on G.'s yogic period. Readers will discover more than two chapters in which a Yoga school is illustrated in a completely different way than we have seen so far, but also mentions related to the school's founder. Here my goal was to invite a nuanced discussion and to increase knowledge about an important spiritual movement of the last 30 years, by no means to idealize or damage the image of this movement.

Șerban Toader

September 2025

G., a brief presentation

He began his readings and spiritual searches in adolescence, at the age of 16, reading a book by Paul Brunton and the Dune SF series, subsequently enrolling and participating in a yoga course opened in his small hometown of C., S. county, Romania (1993).

After two years, he moved to Bucharest (1995), beginning his university studies here, where he continued his yogic practice for another seven years, living for approximately one year in an ashram.

After nine years of Yoga practice, G. chose a change, thus opting, starting in 2003, for a local weekly Qigong course in Bucharest, which he attended for two years under the guidance of a Romanian Qigong instructor, trained in a traditional school in the Wudang mountains.

Subsequently, he joined an international study group led by an Italian anthropologist (2004). In this way, he met Master Luo ("Master Qi") and studied with him in Bangkok for a month. He visited him at home in Indonesia and the Master known as the "Magus of Java" ("John Chang", "Dynamo Jack").

Participation in a conference on Koh Samui island, Thailand, in December 2006, made it possible for him to be accepted as a disciple in the Yi Jin Jing school of the Buddhist Shaolin Master Jiangfeng. Thus, he became the organizer of informal groups to introduce Westerners to this discipline. Over time, he remained constant and consistent in his practice, acquiring the status of the longest-active Western student of this spiritual branch.

Starting in 2007, G. traveled to Asia once every three months for a while, to facilitate meetings between Westerners and Master Jiangfeng's school. In September 2007, he was introduced by Professor of Sociology Wang to the Daoist Master Wang Liping. G. was accepted as a student and received permission to teach the specific method of the Longmen (Dragon Gate) lineage starting in the autumn of 2008.

Following the 2008 seminar with Master Wang Liping, an article was published in a Sociology journal of the Chinese Academy, an article which documents the manner in which the eight Romanian students were instructed in advanced practice methods, exactly one century after

Richard Wilhelm brought the classic work on Neidan (Internal Alchemy) The Secret of the Golden

Flower to Europe.

Starting in October 2018, he teaches weekly, coming on his walks, to the Internal Alchemy Studio located not far from his home, finally managing to inaugurate his own studio for the practice of Qigong and Chan Meditation in Bucharest.

1. The Relationship with China

[11.09.2012]

G.: The relationship with China. I started, in '97, with Eastern practices in general, here in Romania, mostly connected to India, first and foremost, and then I gradually shifted towards traditional Chinese practices, still in Romania, and finally, we ended up traveling, in person, to China. So far, I still haven't made it to India (laughs).

Șerban Toader: What kind of relationship is it with China?

G.: At the moment, we have relationships with two main masters in China; it's about a Buddhist Shaolin master, and another master from a Daoist lineage, called Longmen pai, or "Dragon Gate," in translation.

Ș.T.: But how would you describe this relationship…

G.: The first relationship is a disciple-master type, the one with the Shaolin master; the second is a student-teacher type of relationship, so practically we don't have such a close relationship, but it is still a relationship of learning and transfer of know-how and practice.

Ș.T.: But face to face with China, how would you describe this contact, in broad terms? With your most subjective impressions…

G.: If we only consider since we started traveling, meaning 2007, to China, we can describe the

relationship as rather touristic, that is, practically, in these years we have managed to recommend China to a group of about 300 people, we go there as tourists, as simple tourists, many of them come repeatedly, however, there is also this component of an initiatory journey, we don't have any economic, commercial, political, apolitical nuance… nothing like that exists, there is only a touristic type of relationship, to which we add this component of visiting certain traditional schools, within certain traditional schools in China.

Ș.T.: Now I ask H. (his wife) to speak. How many times have you been? Even if you've been very many times and don't have a statistic, but roughly how many times and when, in what season, in what places?

H.: We started going to China in 2007, in February to be exact, somewhat accidentally: we met a Chinese master in Thailand and two or three weeks later we had the chance to meet him again in China. Later, in August, we were invited to a seminar, also in China, with another Chinese master, and starting in fact from August 2007 we began to travel very often to China, about once every three months, both in the north, and in the south, and in the center, in many places, but following these masters.

G.: Practically, there is a rule: the rule of 100 days, in any collaboration with a master, which says that once every 100 days you must see your master, or your guide, or your instructor. Practically, he tests you, sees if you have completed – so to speak – that level, if you haven't completed it, he adjusts your practice and tells you what you can do next time to pass the test and, if you pass the test, of course, you receive the next practice, that's why once every three months there is this meeting with them.

H.: On the other hand, on the Daoist line, we try to get to an annual seminar, because here the practice is of a different nature and requires a long time to accumulate the knowledge and for you to gain…

G.: …a certain understanding to apply it practically.

H.: Yes.

Ș.T.: More details about the people you meet in China or bring here, what are those who participate in the seminars like, what kind of people are they and what objectives do they have?

H.: In China we were very surprised to discover people with a spiritual profile very similar to Romanians. Everywhere we were looked at with admiration, curiosity, in 2007, in the areas we went to as tourists, there weren't that many Europeans and everyone was delighted by this contact. In restaurants, wherever we went, we were recognized, naturally. It was also very simple. On the other hand, the people who come to the seminars we organize in Romania are Romanians who wish to know Chinese practices, they seek to discover this universe and, sometimes, they also come with us to China.

G.: I would detail a bit the two relationships we have. The first relationship is with a Buddhist Shaolin master from the Huangshan (Yellow Mountain) area. Every time we go via Tunxi, we take a bus and reach a village, near Tunxi, and of course we are talking about rural China…

Ș.T.: What temple is it?

G.: The temple is three hours away from Huangshan, three hours or so by car, on some winding roads, it's quite difficult to get there, so practically, every time we go there we change a domestic flight, a means of transport like a bus, and then, in cars, we go up the mountain on those winding roads to get to the temple. The temple, as far as I remember, is not in the official network of temples, it is quite hidden, it's not open to tourists, by the way, if you pass by on those winding roads, you don't even realize that there is a temple there, because you have to go down some stairs, cross a bridge, and somewhere hidden, beyond that road, is the temple. So I can't say the

temple is called such and such, and is at such and such kilometer, on such and such street, because it's not accessible. That particular temple is inhabited by… the last time we were there the Grand Master was still alive, he hadn't left us yet, and four or five younger monks. Buddhists. The other one is in the northeast area, in Dalian...

Ș.T.: Daoist.

G: Daoist. The lineage is called Longmenpai, or "Dragon Gate," and the person is public, it's Wang Liping, who also has a book translated into English by Thomas Cleary, and the book is called Opening the Dragon Gate. Everything culminated last year, when Wang Liping came in person to Romania and a seminar was organized for which we were co-promoters and co-organizers, so we don't take credit for this seminar in any case… and this seminar had 34-35 participants, somewhere in the Vatra Dornei area, ten days, with an intensive practice schedule, between six and eight hours a day. So exactly like in China.

Ș.T.: What progress have you or your colleagues obtained through the spiritual and bodily practices, but also in the knowledge of China, still traveling very often to China?

H.: We must acknowledge from the very beginning and say that we went to China prepared, meaning the first group that reached Master Wang Liping, eight people, we had all practiced before in Romania for 10-15 years. Of course, we weren't extraordinarily satisfied with the results we obtained in those years, maybe we were also very young and didn't manage to systematize the practice too well, but anyway we went there prepared and we prepared for this seminar, two or three months in advance, each with meditation, bodily techniques, to be ready.

Ș.T.: Concretely, what practices are we talking about and what objectives do these practices have?

H.: The preparatory ones?

Ș.T.: Everything, or what is essential. What is the objective?

G.: There are two types of practices, on any lineage you go, on any traditional school, practically, there are two large categories of exercises and daily routines that you must assume. The first category is the so-called category pertaining to the body and life. They are called *ming* practices. They ensure everything that means health, well-being – fitness, wellness in general, and they are practices with written sources thousands of years old. Practically, this area of calisthenic exercises, or medieval, even ancient fitness, I consider them the first systematized wellness practices, which were accessible to the masses, not just the upper social classes, to be incorporated into the daily routine. So that's the first kind.

H.: Because, as our master also said, "until you have a body, you have a body," so we must also take care of this aspect of our being.

G.: Good, now, although health is important, wellness is an important aspect of our daily life, it is not the most important, as everyone likes to say. Beyond that, there are those *xing* practices, or those pertaining to the so-called constant area (considered by traditional Chinese lineages), beyond the body. If the body is considered the variable part of our destiny, of our nature, likewise, the soul, emotions, even the mind, are considered variable, beyond these variables there is something constant. This constant must be discovered, trained, revealed in a way and a relationship created with it. And we in our religion have things like this, all traditions, including the shamanic ones, quite old, have defined this concept, and we enter an extremely subjective terrain. If with *ming* practices, things are quite clear, meaning it shows on the person, they are healthy, they are not healthy, their body is correct, symmetrical, correctly aligned, and so on, here things are a bit more subjective, they must be approached with a bit more non-involvement and non-forcefulness, it's not like fitness, like weightlifting, and it requires much greater discipline, so much greater perseverance and discipline, because the results appear in an extremely long time, unlike the others. Yes? So the *ming* techniques and the *xing* techniques.

Ș.T.: What else could be learned besides these practices which are still… they require some qualities and perseverance, in general what else could Westerners learn from China? And Romanians among them.

G.: Before getting into things related to technique and daily routines, it seemed to me – in China – the idea of "knowing your place, seeing the length of your nose [mind your own business], being humble," or knowing when not to get involved in a discussion seemed very well structured to me. Politeness… we Romanians haven't really seen this politeness in public space. Society has been quite forceful, while there… I'm not discussing the reasons why… many people could argue: "politeness is something forced there." Ok, I don't want to discuss that. The fact is that it exists. That is, people always "leave room for everyday hello", as we say in Romania. They always discuss through a third party, so that there isn't too much aggression in the conversation. Negative answers or refusals are given in a certain form and expressed in a certain way, so that they are not too aggressive. These are some things which, from my point of view, we Westerners – and Romanians in particular – must study and I think it would do us good if we understood them and made them our own, at least to some extent.

H.: We also observed a certain structuring of relationships, a kind of hierarchy that is visible, it's not stated, it's observed and which is respected.

G.: This informal hierarchy, which we observed in relationships, can be totally different from the formal hierarchy. For example, a concrete example: in one of the Buddhist temples, we observed the following thing: all the respective ceremonies were supported by the monk with the highest ritual rank. But the person who had the best abilities and the powers most recognized de facto by the rest of the school respected him. So it was a matter of assumption. Ok, we have a leader who must conduct the ceremonies and take care of everything that means the administrative part, and this leader, who was administrative, always recognized, on the other hand, the leadership and power of the other. I never saw an antagonistic approach between the two. On the contrary, they supported each other. Something which, again, I believe must be learned in the West. Because

there is always a de facto leader, who is on paper, and there is a rightful leader, who must support the other, must lift him up, and often between the two of them there is a certain antithesis with us, an argument often breaks out… competition… They perceive each other as competitors, although if we look from above, both are part of the same lineage, they must lift the cause of the school or carry it further… the Chinese tradition… the respective Romanian tradition… we can learn these things very well from a civilization that has, after all, a few thousand years behind it, with written sources, without interruption.

Ș.T.: For the future, what personal projects…

H.: We would very much like next year to organize a seminar in China, again with Master Wang Liping, for this Daoist branch, for which we are preparing. This means that we organize some seminars in Romania within which we teach them what we also learned from the Master, as much as he allowed us to transmit. It takes time and we will need a lot of time and very persevering and dedicated people.

Ș.T.: And in the long term, how do you see yourselves in ten years with your personal practice?

G.: From my point of view, things are quite clear, if I look at body maintenance, generally speaking, everything that means traditional Chinese exercise has effects much superior to so-called Western fitness, it also requires less effort and can be approached at home without machinery, without other auxiliary things. So from the point of view of physical practice, it is very clear where our soul is… where we are heading…

H.: Also from the point of view of physical practices, we are trying to bring to the attention of those who wish a new type of seminar intended only for physical practices, more precisely for straightening the spinal column. The work that most of us do involves sitting a lot at a desk, in not very comfortable positions and after years this shortcoming is felt and seen.

G.: Yes, because the spinal column is considered the axis of being. Not by chance all traditions have – if we look at the body maps, there are very important centers along the spinal column, in any part of the world we look at these maps. The spinal column is the axis.

H.: On the other hand, without a correct posture, one cannot approach in any way, or with an efficiency that tends towards zero… You can't sit in meditation for two hours, and after that do certain practices that require that technique, so it's impossible. You are drained, literally... if you endure.

G.: One can also cross into the area of torture, of course, there are people who have extraordinary willpower and remain seated in pain, but that is not meditation. So practically, the transition to the *xing* domain cannot be made as long as the body is not aligned, is not symmetrical, does not have a stable structure in meditation. It's like trying to run an electric current through wiring that is interrupted. Or that is not resistant, doesn't have the required resistance. Always, to approach *xing* practices, the body must be very well prepared. And to return to the question about future plans: from the point of view of *xing*, these practices that involve breathing and meditation... they also bear the name of Neidan, or Neidan shu, or Neidan gong, there will be seminars for beginners and intermediates, for now, we will not do seminars for advanced practitioners. Also, organized in Romania, with the purpose of offering access to those who cannot afford a trip to China or a seminar in China, or in Asia, in general. That is on one hand, and on the other hand, those who wish to come and experience the Chinese tradition directly can prepare and can already arrive in China with a certain introductory baggage of knowledge and techniques.

Ș.T.: What impressions did you come back with after several visits to Dalian, respectively to Huangshan?

G.: The rural area in China, the area in Huangshan, the area along that line, Shanghai-Nanjing-Huangshan, is a special area first of all from the point of view of traditional Chinese medicine. Because there are some mountains and some lands that still preserve those herbs and those plants

from which traditional Chinese medicines can be created. It's one thing to know the recipe and another to know the ingredients of that recipe and to be able to get them within 48 hours, for example. From my point of view, that area should be protected, conserved, and invested in. Because only in those mountains and in those lands do certain species of herbs grow, certain leaves are found. Something which I could say belongs to the treasure of humanity. I don't know how long what is there will last, because China is evolving, entering modernity... in fact it entered modernity long ago, but the rural, wild areas are also starting to be affected by this thing and – I believe that in ten-fifteen years, if something is not done in this sense – access to these traditional things will diminish drastically. And as a general impression, Huangshan has become a strong tourist area, there are five-star hotels in Huangshan, which far surpass our five-star hotels and I know what I'm talking about (laughs), there are very diverse entertainment possibilities, in the sense that you can go rafting, you can go visit the city where "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" was filmed, you can visit silk factories, you can visit ink factories.

2. The Beginning of the Searches

[26.07.2013]

Q (Șerban Toader): Pilot interview, we discussed before the interview what our goal is, the thread we are looking for: the spiritual searches of those who have practiced a form of Yoga, generically speaking, or a form of martial art, their searches are not purely physical, are not limited just to physical performance, but tend towards a form of spirituality, each in their own way. We will talk about those who sought spiritual amelioration through Yoga, generically naming Yoga any form of spiritual search, which can also be eclectic, Yoga plus something else. Let's see if that's the case.

We are discussing along a biographical thread, so the beginning is the idea – we start with the idea, the intention, the beginning of the spiritual search.

A (G.): Well, as far as I'm concerned, I can't even define it as spiritual, the search that began, the trigger for me was quite simple: I read Dune. The novel Dune, a SF novel written by Frank Herbert, is a novel that from volume two onwards is primarily very hard to get through, even for an adult, let alone for a 16-year-old child. I was that age, 15-16 years old, thereabouts. And somewhere in the middle of the first volume, that Paul, the main character, transforms from… he is trained by his mother. He also ingests some constituents, the so-called melange, which grew there in the desert of Dune, so it has all the elements of training and initiatic, and based on these trainings he becomes…

Q: …why initiatic? Does it resemble something...so it doesn't resemble anything learned before, but it resembles something learned later, somehow?

A: Why initiatic? Well, initiatic because it gave him access to a reality he didn't have before… to that new reality he could access, he didn't have access before that training.

Q: But now we are talking about G. …

A: So that was the trigger, the novel, in the sense that I thought – but…let's say also in the case of people, in fact we only use 5% of all the abilities we have, and that the rest remain somewhere dormant, latent, untrained, unawakened, it means that in fact we are not reaching our potential, as human beings. The human potential is not reached, that's why I say it wasn't a spiritual search per se , so it wasn't a truly spiritual search, as I had seen in other movies…and then I started to look for everything that resembled training like the training in Dune. There in Dune some trainings were described that very much resembled Yoga…

Q: What did you know about Yoga until then?

A: After Dune, immediately after Dune I read a book called The White Yogi, Paul Brunton, I think it's the only book printed before '89, I still remember: a black cover with a yogi in meditation posture, in violet color. And there…

Q: Before '89?

A: The book was printed before '89, as far as I remember.

Q: It was translated into Romanian…

A: Into Romanian, yes, and it ended…the last 50 pages literally described a samadhi, they described a cosmic experience…

Q: What actually is a samadhi?

A: A samadhi was, with my mind back then, I understood that samadhi would be access to something transcendental, to "that reality", which you cannot see by looking with physical eyes.

Q: What reality?

A: What kind of reality? A reality that you perceive beyond the boundaries imposed by normal sensory instruments, sight, hearing, touch and so on.

Q: Do we have… or are there people who have certainty about that reality?

A: Yes, at that time, from the moment I read Dune, from the moment this thing with The White Yogi was reaffirmed to me, it was clear to me that such a thing exists and that it's just a matter of training. To reach the point of discovering that reality and that in fact it is accessible to anyone and, somehow, reading those things, I had the impression that I had done them since forever, that they came from somewhere from where…It's like an intuition, I don't know how to explain it to you…

Q: But you can't have certainties. An intuition, yes, I can understand, but you can't have certainties when you simply read about something, even if in a way…

A: Yes you can, because you remember some things, it's as if you have a déjà vu, and that déjà vu induces a state of certainty much stronger than… when that intuition wakes up, I would call it a bit extrasensory or that extrasensory gut feeling… in my opinion, we act much more under the rule of that gut feeling, in all the decisions we make day by day.

Q: And if something still says no, refuses this intuition…

A: Yes, the rational mind says no, such a thing belongs to the realm of the paranormal. But that doesn't – and I am a skeptic, I am one of the most skeptical people in my circle, because I already have a fairly large network of people who are concerned with these things and I don't swallow things raw, being at heart also an IT guy. But, it's ok to be skeptical, it's ok to let that part work, the rational part, as long as you also let the intuitive part work. And then a conversation takes place,

like a yin-yang polarity on this level of the mind. So there is a part that says "no, no, what it says there in The White Yogi, on the last 50 pages with samadhi, is illogical, such a thing doesn't exist, it's in the author's imagination", and there is also this other part, which says: "hmm, but what if it were true?!".

Q: Yes, but that's not a certainty.

A: But what if through training one gets there? What if what the rational mind says is in fact half true? What if, from what Paul Brunton says there, only 15% is true? So you go on this what if, how should I say, "you don't know what you don't know", that quadrant where you don't know what you don't know. It's obvious that reason always wins at first. But the more that quadrant is eroded and the more you extend through experience, through "experiential" actually, and reduce this quadrant, "I don't know what I don't know", the more the rational mind begins to accept that sometimes, not always, sometimes, it is not right. That is, not always its rational laws apply to the internal and external reality of the individual.

Q: Can it be experienced, taking this intuition, simply, as a working hypothesis? In that case we are no longer talking about certainties…

A: Hypothesis – I don't like the word, I understand the nuance of the question, but a hypothesis is when you do demonstrations for geometry theorems, then you have a hypothesis, you have a conclusion and you try to get from the hypothesis to the conclusion. The problem is – that here it's not a hypothesis, you can't do a long-term training based on that "but what if?". There must be something else, besides that "but what if?", awakened inside, awakened which comes from – I would call it another life, I think. If I were to dare to pronounce this thing. Or from an area of the collective subconscious, or…from a non-rational area, let's call it that. From a non-rational area, yes? That certainty appears and sometimes it is much stronger than everything produced by the rational area of the mind.

Q: How does this power manifest itself?

A: In daily life I think everyone has experienced, for example, emotional phenomena. That is, they made decisions under the rule of emotions, depending on what affects were manifesting in the mental-emotional landscape, right? So, in a way, even in daily life the mind loses, reason loses. Everything we do, all purchasing decisions, in a store, we first make them with emotions, and afterwards we justify them with reason. Yes, I will buy this 200 horsepower car, the emotion I feel is the fact that I press that accelerator pedal and feel that roar of the engine – that is the emotion. Is there anything rational there? No. But afterwards you justify with the rational. Because I get to 100 kilometers per hour in less than five seconds and, therefore, my car will be much more powerful on the highway. So the justification always comes after rationalization, but the decision itself is made from a non-rational zone.

And here, if you allow me, I will tell you about an experiment in neuroscience. They did the following experiment – it's even on the BBC documentary, we'll have to see exactly what the author of the documentary is called, because he is a man from the world of science…And the experiment consists of the following thing: they put some sensors on the cerebral cortex to measure the signals of different areas of the brain, and two joysticks, with two buttons in the left hand and in the right hand, one in each hand. And they were asked to press one of the buttons successively, multiple times – tens of times. And at a distance of 15-20 seconds this pressing…What the scientists discovered in this whole experiment… they discovered that in fact, the brain, the area in the brain that activated the hand corresponding to the button press, was activated six seconds before the button was actually pressed. So this means that, rationally, that pressing with the left hand, let's say, on the button, appeared in the rational field much later, much, much later after the decision had already been made, at the subconscious level, or at the emotional level, or at a level that did not pertain to the neocortex. That's the idea – neocortex, that's where we have reason, the more you go towards the meso- and towards the reptilian brain, you have things that pertain to reflex, to animality, to emotions, to…It is, or that person's brain has premonition and…

Q: What is premonition?

A: …and it knows long before pressing, respectively six seconds, what the person will press, or that person's brain actually makes decisions ahead of the rational mind.

Q: What is premonition?

A: The ability to predict things that will happen in the future, long before they happen.

Q: Is there an explanation in Yoga for this?

A: Yes, it's a thing called akasha, where all events from past, present and future are recorded, in high definition (laughs), complete with sensations and so on and …

Q: And what is the material that… the support?

A: That's what it's called, akasha. Akasha is the material, the storage medium, which you can access when you want to go either into the past, or into the future, or to obtain a more complete, more high-definition version of the present.

Q: Is there a technology that can access this information?

A: I…I haven't succeeded in any kind of training in this sense. Yes, there is: trainings, technology in this sense, yes.

Q: Devices?

A: Ah, you mean in a scientific sense? In a scientific sense I don't think it exists, but quantum

physics, at the moment, is somewhat converging towards the same thing described by the ancient texts…

Q: What texts?

A: The Vedas, Bhagavad Gita and so on. They are ancient Indian texts, which in fact converge very much towards what quantum physics affirms today, see research with…or for example string theory, or the double-slit experiment…

Q: But, my question is: isn't all this analogy too facile? They are two disciplines, two different paradigms, each operates with different terms and concepts and symbols. Do we allow ourselves to make analogies or to explain one discipline, such as Yoga, or a teaching, through new currents in physics? Isn't the proximity, the analogy, too handy?

A: Throughout humanity we have observed a trend, the trend being that science comes and confirms at some point what the classical texts say…

Q: Are there other examples?

A: Yes, very many examples. Studies related to the lunar calendar, to agriculture, studies related to sleep, confirm the influence of the lunar phases on Earth.

Q: What kind of influence?

A: For example, during the full moon it is known that sleep is affected in the sense of reducing duration and quality. Something that has been written about for thousands of years.

Q: Where is it written?

A: It is written in Daoism too, there are entire practices in Daoism based on the phases of the Moon, and, also, among shamans, in South America. Shamanism in South America.

Q: But there it's not written.

A: It is written. There are written sources. Also, there is in all this part of agriculture, we find it with the Chinese. And now – there are studies that do nothing but confirm what was stated empirically, thus unscientifically, 2000, 1000, 3000, 4000 years ago. They only confirm, but through research channels…For example, that thing with sleep. They did as is done in any scientific study with two batches: the batch that… not with two batches. The same batch but in different sleep periods. And they monitored tens, hundreds of people, they monitored how much they slept and how long they stayed in dreamless sleep, because brain waves can be measured, overnight. And they made some percentages, right? And it was observed that, on average, around the full moon area, people sleep even less, by about 25 minutes, the same people, right? By about 25 minutes, and – of course the respective people did not know that this was being studied and the rooms where they slept were closed, the Moon in the sky did not affect them because they didn't know…

Q: They didn't see it.

A: They didn't see it before sleeping. They were not made aware regarding this aspect. But not only that, not only was this period of sleep reduced, but the quality of sleep was also reduced, meaning the percentage of time people spent in dreamless sleep – the best period for regeneration of neurons, the organism and so on, tissues, percentage-wise it was smaller, from what I understood, by 15%.

So not only did you sleep less – 25 minutes is a significant percentage, if we relate to 7-8 hours – but that less time was also of worse quality for the organism in terms of regeneration.

That's why, for example, Daoists recommend that before and after the full moon by a day or two, rather meditate before, take from the sleep period, half an hour, an hour of sleep and meditate it before going to bed. Because, anyway, you sleep less and you sleep worse.

Q: What does it mean to meditate? We will return…

A: Okay, that…

Q: But an introduction would be good.

A: An introduction to meditation. Meditation is…I call it sitting, for beginners, and the final configuration we must reach is meditation, and it goes through concentration. So the stages are, briefly: obtaining a stable posture, a stable and aligned physical posture; this is phase I. Phase II, after this result is stabilized, one moves on to calming the breath, this entails ordering the thoughts, cleansing the heart of emotions, more or less negative or turbulent, even if they are positive. So obtaining a stability of the breath after physical stability, after which one moves on to mental stability, which is the hardest to obtain and which cannot happen, in principle, without the other two.

Q: What is the purpose of meditation?

A: Well, at the moment the three preconditions are created, work can begin in two directions: either towards obtaining something that leads to concentration, concentration means you fix a subject of observation and you keep it in your field of observation, a subject-object connection, or you don't choose any kind of subject of observation, but you try to let yourself be carried, to maintain stability at the three levels, undisturbed. And then, through this state of being carried, of maintenance, of sustaining the three stabilities – physical, respiratory, mental – it is practically considered that you are moving more towards meditation. In concentration, in principle, you

impose your instrument of your own intention upon what is happening inside you and around you, in meditation you let the Universe tell you something and teach you something…

Q: What should the Universe say?

A: There are several approaches in the meditation variant. There is meditation – for example like vipassana, which is…

Q: In parentheses: how do we know, so we don't go too much into details…how do we know that we receive something that "comes from the Universe"? With a capital "U", we define it as something superior…

A: Well, at the time I started Yoga I didn't know that the Universe tells you something, so I didn't have a certainty. Now, after traveling to China, and meeting, in my opinion, four authentic masters, I consider that during those meditations – yes, the Universe not only tells you something, but also sends you something, to store inside.

Q: How do we know they come from the Universe?

A: How do I know they come from an external force, as it were…some call it God, others Universe, others call it Macrocosm, others call it a Force, others call it Field, those with quantum physics for example.

Q: How do we know they are talking about the same thing?

A: Because all the functions described or characteristics described regarding these denominations

converge towards the same thing, in the sense that they do not try to describe anything other than a support-reality, which supports the entire Newtonian reality, let's call it that – the 3D in which we move, this everyday, easily perceivable one. It's like if you asked me: but how do I know that radio waves exist? Well, because I turn on the radio and the radio plays. That's how I know radio waves exist. There is nothing that reveals this radio wave to our anatomical senses. There is no such thing. Only a turned-on radio that starts to play, set to a certain frequency, confirms to us in one way or another that there is a radio station, an antenna, a receiver and a speaker through which all these signals pass and are transformed and finally a noise is produced which is the only thing our ear perceives. So it is through a cause-effect description, the same with the Universe which tries to tell you something. The moment certain phenomena only happen in stillness – in the stability of the three, physical, breath and mental. And as a result of sustained training, the chances that those things mean the Universe is telling you something are very high…once again: we are not talking about some scientific certainties. But we are talking about some cause-effect things. Look, there is pyro-kinesis at a distance. That is, setting objects on fire, without touching them, from a distance.

Q: Isn't it charlatanism?

A: Good. Let's move past the fact of whether it is or isn't charlatanism, because if we remain in the discussion of "it's charlatanism", then we don't go anywhere, so we set aside the tricksters, the fakirs and the illusionists. This is an honest thing, I have experienced it countless times, hundreds of people, tens of people, countless times, in various contexts, with various things that were set on fire, even a shirt on a person was set on fire, or a person's skin, or a napkin, or a sheet of paper that couldn't possibly be touched by the person setting the fire. And the explanation was very simple: it's about Qi, which has a certain intensity and is sent through the two fingers, the index and the middle finger…

Q: What is Qi?

A: This Qi can be an object of that conversation between the Universe and the human body. That Qi is what the Universe wants to tell us. In Chinese, it is translated, well, into our rather limited

Western languages, as "vital energy" and is always explained in conjunction with two other concepts: *jing* , "vital essence" and *shen* , "awareness" – we don't even have a word in Romanian for that. It's often poorly translated as "spirit". However, I've been to many seminars and discussions on this topic: it is not spirit. *Shen* is that "consciousness" which can reveal or refute or perceive; the spirit in the Chinese language is denoted by another word: *ling* . More precisely, *xinling* , meaning *xin* in the sense of heart and *ling* after it. But this Qi, which makes this experiment possible, this demo of setting an object on fire from a distance without touching it, is like in the radio explanation: we only see that flame on the napkin and that the napkin is holed by the flame, or we feel on our skin that something is burning us.

Q: Is it a form of energy?

A: It is a form of energy, an intensified form of energy even. In the sense that everyone has energy, otherwise we wouldn't be alive.

Q: What form is this that we didn't learn about in school?

A: The form... it's the ultimate form of this Qi, the most intense. There is an intermediate form. There is *neng*, which is a vibratory form of energy...

Q: But there are many nuances...

A: There is a more concentrated form, which the Chinese call *li*, or "force", and there is the ultimate concentration, the ultimate intensity, like a jet of water under pressure, which is Qi. In fact, the training is not to obtain Qi per se , but to obtain sufficient intensity so that the consistency of that energy is at the level of Qi.

Q: We've gone into too much detail and at the same time we've gotten a little close to SF. There

are things explained scientifically, there is also SF, "science fiction"...

A: Yes, well here's the trouble, with Qi we have no biometrics. If for electromagnetic waves there are measuring devices, there are units of measurement, there is... it's accepted by science, regarding Qi, that is not the case! So Qi has not been measured, has not been scientifically evidenced, has not been "discovered" by science, yet. That's a key word: "yet". Although Western medicine accepts acupuncture as a form of alternative medicine, and at the base of alternative medicine, called acupuncture, lies the concept of Qi, so, somehow, a science accepts a "non-science", if we look at it correctly... acupuncture is even studied in university. Although this happens, if we are correct to the end, Qi has not been discovered, it is not a scientific reality...

Q: It is not proven...

A: No! It is demonstrable: there are masters who can, at will, produce the same results.

Q: Who are these masters?

A: Masters are some slightly more advanced human beings, who have awakened that 95% we were talking about...

Q: Aren't they also a kind of SF characters?

A: No. They are real people, they are real people...

Q: How do they differ?

A: They differ from normal people simply by the fact that they can demonstrate, at will,

paranormal things, paranormal phenomena. Like: meditation; emission of Qi that transforms into...

Q: Is the term "paranormal" appropriate?

A: Yes, because it's... Why "paranormal"? Because it is not part of our immediate daily life. Although, if you go to rural China, where I go, once every 90 days, in the Huangshan area... I'm sorry, but the paranormal is part of daily life. When I go there, this happens without any problem, repeatedly...

Q: What happens?

A: The things I told you: from remote pyrokinesis to... everything related to Qi, because Qi can be emitted outward and can produce multiple effects, not just setting a napkin on fire. That's the worst use of a Qi emission, in my opinion (laughs). But it's the easiest to film, by the way. However, there is the possibility that this Qi emitted outward can change the taste of a liquid: a glass of flat water, if you emit Qi into it, you can make it very bitter, or very sweet. Just think what could happen at the level of blood if you use this Qi. You can detoxify, change the qualities, the properties of that liquid – the blood, in the sense of "detoxing" it, with the help of Qi. So if we go step by step, and move past the fact that we have no biometrics for Qi, but Qi is demonstrable by the fact that it produces effects in our objective reality, then, if we go step by step we can observe that, in fact, this paranormal is not paranormal at all, it is very normal, it's just that some people have trained for tens of years to make it normal, in their reality. Therefore, between normal and paranormal, you are separated by some years, or tens of years, of training, a few hours a day, day after day. Exactly like in Dune. Because there an extremely Spartan training was described, in which Paul had to listen to his mother, Paul had to ingest that spice, Paul had another trainer, the swordsman. So he learned from multiple people and was guided towards awakening these abilities. Well, before training it was of course not paranormal; after this training it of course became gradually paranormal, through the abilities he displayed.

Q: Do we continue to use the term "paranormal"? Or can we find a better one? If we talk about the Gospel, then it would be called a "miracle", this change of taste, transformation...

A: Dune uses the term god-man; in psychology I've seen the term "super-man" used more and more...

Q: In what psychology?

A: ...in nutrition there are "super-foods", everything has "super" in front of it...

Q: In what psychology?

A: Modern psychology, I've seen all sorts of articles where the idea was accepted that human potential, beyond environment, becomes a kind of "super-human" potential, let's say. Something that is awakened and trained. This exists...

Q: What should a "super-man" look like? A man who reaches the maximum... tends towards the maximum of his potential?

A: Hm...

Q: What kind of man would that be?

A: (after a long silence): Yes. There are two essential characteristics of these super-men, of these... masters, let's call them that. One: they have an extremely good, extremely optimized functioning of the organism, if I may use that... so it's something... their organism functions like "clockwork". It's like a Swiss watch. This entails two things that are observable with the naked eye: they age

much slower than a normal person, much, much slower; and two: they get sick much more rarely or almost not at all, compared to a normal person.

Q: That pertains to the body...

A: That is an important aspect, but not the most important. The most important aspect in this whole equation is that, based on this foundation – a healthy body, or significant, higher quantities of energy or Qi than a normal person – some spiritual capacities are awakened, which pertain more to the mind, which pertain more to this non-tactile, non-body, non-organic part. And when one reaches this level, phenomena such as: premonition, clairvoyance, clairaudience, empathy – but very faithful empathy, empathy also exists in a couple, but...

Q: What would "faithful empathy" be like?

A: Well for example I had a very clear case during a seminar, where the respective master, who was guiding the whole seminar, told a woman exactly why she was sad, what events in her life had brought her to that state, what she needed to do to make it fade and including telepathy, there were very clear telepathy phenomena, he knew if you had your tongue on the roof of your mouth, without looking in your mouth, obviously, he knew if you had imagined a moving or a static image, he knew if two people in the group had imagined the same image; well, these are things that already pertain to *shen*, pertain to this part of consciousness...

Q: We will get to a description of the Chinese concepts...

A: But they define what in my opinion is a super-man and a master. So it is not just a man who is long-lived and very healthy, it is also a man who has mental, psycho-emotional and spiritual abilities far above average. And which are so obvious and clear that they cannot be denied or contested in any way.

Q: What was the character in Dune tending towards? He was undergoing an initiation, going through an initiation, and tending towards...?

A: He had both. So he became in a way a being... here the analogy breaks, because Paul eventually became a man-worm. That is, in a way, two species united: the desert worm – that's what it was called, together with the human being, Paul, and as a result of this symbiosis, this super-man-worm-god, I don't know what to call him, became the king, the emperor of that land, of that planet, Arakis I think. Annnd – here the analogy breaks. If we stay until volume one, where Paul is still human and is perfected...

Q: Okay, so does Paul have masters?

A: Paul has trainers, he does not have masters. His mother and the swordsman... I forget the name now...

Q: What is the "spice"?

A: The spice was a melange, blue in color, which grew only in the desert area and which in a way gave access to some states of super-consciousness.

Q: Is it a metaphor for hallucinogenic plants on Earth?

A: It can be interpreted in two keys. It can be interpreted as these hallucinogenic substances... which produce...

Q: Synthetic, or...

A: Synthetic or natural, it doesn't matter. In the book they were natural. There was nothing produced by synthesis. It can be a metaphor for an internal ingredient, which the organism learns to produce over time, as a result of sustained training, which ingredient, in the end, will lead to the same result. Putting the mind into a trans- state, of perception a bit beyond the classical, biological, anatomical senses.

Q: So the spice can be cultivated and harvested externally but also internally?

A: Exactly, there are practically two currents... any school, any tradition is divided into two: there is the external school and the internal school.

Q: Here we are already getting to the Chinese.

A: No, no, no. It applies to Indians as well, and to shamans... and to Christians...

Q: Yes, but we started with SF.

A: Well what does SF ultimately mean? Science-fiction, right? It has science, it has fiction, but it also has the science part, no? In the end, in any tradition you look at, the lineages are divided into two...

Q: I interrupt you here: the interpretation regarding the spice as a compound obtained internally, is that a personal interpretation?

A: No, it's not personal, it is encountered everywhere.

Q: Is it influenced by Chinese internal alchemy?

A: It is influenced by the philosopher's stone, and by internal alchemy, and by the Indian tradition, and there is a kundalini snake there, which is actually dormant, but awakens at some point and travels a certain path. It exists with the Japanese too...

Q: Is there an allusion somehow even in the novel, in Dune, that it could be something internal?

A: Yes, there is an allusion that it could be internal. Because when they took that spice, a very interesting phenomenon happened: their eyes turned blue. What did this mean? It meant that, in essence, the final effect of that external element still took place internally. Ah, that you helped yourself with an external catalyst, that is another discussion.

Q: What catalyst?

A: That melange . But the final desired effect was internal. The eyes turned blue and all those who had blue eyes became Arakis people. That's why that melange was much more valuable than gold, or than other precious stones, or than food... why? Because whoever possessed the melange, actually possessed the key to these abilities, the 95%, dormant in the rest of people. It was the key to – as the English say – leverage. Because if you manage to access 95% of the potential that others cannot access, this means not only power, but it also means value, added value for what you accessed with the help of that melange .

Q: Somehow an allusion to some kind of racial superiority? This interpretation is very handy. And it's not something new.

A: No, because it was about the same race, it's just that certain individuals from the same race were willing to make the effort for training, for awakening the 95%. In fact, if you think about it,

there is this law of... 80 with 20. Which says this: with 20% of the effort you get 80% of the effect. If you apply 80/20 again to something that is already 80/20 you get to 95 with 5, that is my favorite percentage. So if you apply it twice, you get to about 5%, with 5% of the effort you can determine 95% of the effects. This "iterativeness of Pareto" I like very much. Good. The idea is as follows: from a biological population, from a race, there will always be 5% of people – the nucleus. Right? So leadership. And 95% is following. Now, that this proportion can be abused, one can reach enormities like Hitler with that Aryan theory and all these madnesses... well, it is a possibility. If we look realistically, not only at people, but at animals, and at insects...

Q: Why is there a need for these analogies with other species, because they might be misplaced, in any case analogies with the biological world are somehow outdated. Why must we take wolves as an example?

A: Why are they outdated? This is the way the race has survived and regenerated. And it still exists today. Those who failed to apply these laws, "Pareto", and to adapt, to evolve, those who did not respect their elites, as races, have disappeared. Let's take it much simpler, let's go much more basal, more to physics. Lions, who spread their genetic characteristics the most, are lions who win the most in fights with male opponents. Correct? Well, this has two preconditions: that the muscles of that lion are much more trained, and the mental capacities and anticipation, so the planning capacities of that lion, are far above average. This produces as effects two other things: that the weaker males cannot reproduce, so they cannot regenerate their incompetence in the species, and that the alpha lion, the alpha male can improve the race by spreading those much better genes. And in this way, reiterating from generation to generation this better, better, better, this species has become what it is today, the species of lions.

Q: Why are lions so interesting?

A: You can take any other example. I took a handy example, because the lion is considered the king of animals. In this case, the master is always very important. Those who have that 95% awakened, from my point of view, are those who have made the world move forward. Not those

who had political power, not those who had huge armies, not those who possessed scientific secrets or... I believe that these others have made the world, indeed, move further...

Q: But why do you believe the world moves forward?

A: In the sense of evolving, to be better today than yesterday, for it to be easier for us today to stay alive, long-lived, healthy, than yesterday. So I believe that is essential, from my point of view, to understand things. That if we only go on military, political, economic, scientific, territorial power and so on, we won't get anywhere.

Q: But what about the vaccines we received as children? Thanks to them we don't die from diseases that killed people 100 years ago.

A: No, but you could have the vaccine and have a level of consciousness so low that we fight wars like the Second World War all day long, even with the vaccines taken in childhood.

Q: Well that happens, where is the evolution?

A: The idea is that – it doesn't happen on that scale anymore... there is a new science of war, a diplomacy, there is – from my point of view society, even at a global level, is less belligerent than it was 100 years ago, 70 years ago... people, nations declare war and consider themselves separate from the rest of the world much harder than before, on the contrary, now there is a tendency in the other extreme – for everyone to be united, the same, in the same structures, this globalization, the internet that connects us to everyone and everything at the same time...

3. Searches

[26.07.2013 B]

Q: What else did you learn from science fiction?

A: Well, I didn't read too much science fiction. Besides that "Nemira" series, right after the Revolution, I can't say I consumed science fiction avidly, as usually happens, because I started practicing (laughs). And around the age of… so in 2006 I even reached China. Actually earlier. I remember my first paranormal experience very clearly, I think it was somewhere in 2004. Yes, 2004 in Bangkok, I had my first Qi emission experiment, with a Chinese master who lived in Bangkok, and that's when I had confirmation for the first time that all these discussions about Qi and energies and force centers and accumulation centers are actually very real, palpable, and concrete things. It was a confirmation after almost ten years of searching, if I take 1993 as the first year of practice, in 2004 I had the first paranormal demo, so it was ten, 11 years.

Q: How do you see a reading like Dune now?

A: Oh, but I re-read Dune. So up to the part where the worm and the man become one, so up to that part it seems very aligned with what I have lived in the last seven years, so from 2006 until now in 2013…

Q: Aligned?

A: Aligned in the sense of in tune, meaning right around there.

Q: Did you read any more SF?

A: I haven't read any more SF, my reading has changed drastically in recent years, I read personal development, communication, psychology, leadership, things like that. So I don't read SF anymore, I read a lot of this kind of reading, on marketing, on direct marketing, Daoist reading, this New Age reading, as it's called, esoteric let's say…

Q: Here is the trap. Don't we end up with a kind of "hodgepodge"?

A: Yes, there is a lot of garbage in literature… especially esoteric, but by the nature of my activity I have to know what is written in this niche, to be up to date with the conversation taking place in this niche at the community esoteric level, and I can say with great certainty that if you don't read esoteric literature, you are not missing anything. That is, instead of wasting time reading esoteric literature, I would rather waste my time or gain that time by practicing and collaborating with an authentic traditional lineage from anywhere, from India, from China, from Japan, from Romania, it doesn't matter.

Q: A lineage? What does that mean?

A: A lineage means the succession of masters in a spiritual school. A traditional spiritual school. Let's say, we have Buddhism. Buddhism is the large current, it's the tradition, macro. In Buddhism there are several sub-branches, so to speak. Well, one of these branches is a Shaolin branch, let's say, the Shaolin Buddhists, the Shaolin monks, who are nothing more than some more "martial" Buddhists. They have their lineage, which is different from another Buddhist lineage.

Q: Is a lineage a "tradition"?

A: A lineage is not a tradition. Buddhism is a tradition. The lineage is the implementation of that tradition in a concrete, anthropological context. They even have a special word, the Chinese, *pai*: "branch," branch , sub-tradition, sub-school, let's say. It's as if you said there is medicine, in a

general way, but this medicine has several specializations. It's kind of like that on this side too: there is Buddhism, or Daoism, well, grosso modo, or Christianity, but there are also different implementations, different schools with different lineages, with different successions of masters, specific to each anthropological context. In this case, with the Shaolin, since we started this discussion, my master's lineage has 83 successors, he is the eighty-third.

Q: Is there innovation in these lineages?

A: Yes, the process is very simple. Everything that is practiced is practiced based on the instructions of the previous generation. The previous generation teaches those practices to the current generation. As a result of executing those practices, results appear or not.

Q: What is taught? What is transmitted from a master to a disciple?

A: Well, there are multiple objects of teaching. There are meditation techniques… of sitting , let's not call them meditation anymore. Sitting techniques, breathing techniques, physical, rather calisthenic techniques, which include the body and the movement of the body, things related to diet, things related to sleep regimen, lifestyle, such matters. Not only that, even clothing, or how you place things around the house, in the case of Feng Shui, or the art of divination, in the case of the Yi jing. There are many things that can be taught. In authentic schools, I am interested in the calisthenic part, so body-movement, the breathing part and the sitting part, the meditative part. And a bit of the sleep part, as well, more auxiliary, because it is also important.

Q: The sleep part isn't talked about much… is sleep a practice?

A: Yes, you can turn sleep into a practice.

Q: For example…

A: You can turn what you do before sleep into practice and what you do after sleep into practice. So, those transitional elements of the mind from the waking state to the sleep state and vice versa, from sleep to the waking state, are very appreciated, very important in all traditions. All traditions take care of these moments, of the hiatus, because by accessing that short zone, when this transition takes place, this switching from sleep to wakefulness and from wakefulness to sleep, one can then train sitting much better. Because sitting, after all… that mental stability, a precondition for concentration and/or meditation…

Q: Let's recap: what is the purpose of this sitting?

A: Achieving a state of concentration, or a state of meditation.

Q: Why?

A: Because in these two configurations you can either develop something through your own intention, or receive something from the natural environment, from nature.

Q: What can you receive and what can you develop?

A: You can develop, for example, an energy pathway or a point on the human body, or an area inside the body, or you can repair an organ that is not functioning…

Q: How do you repair an organ?

A: The function of an organ, not the organ itself. If something, functionally, is broken, there are very clear methods for rebalancing that function…

Q: So there are techniques…

A: Yees, see for example the circuit of the five elements in Daoism. Which is taught in acupuncture, but there is… it's taught in acupuncture for pathological conditions. However, there are also physiological conditions in which this circuit functions. And the transition from physiological to pathological doesn't happen like that, from one day to the next (snaps fingers), it happens over weeks, months, years. Now, if you are careful to prevent from the moment a small imbalance appears, to repair it all the time, to bring it back to a state of balance, of "balancing" that respective function, this is for example a small process of self-healing. Which is within anyone's reach and which, if applied, in my opinion, would yield much better results in terms of health and prevention than classical methods.

Q: As an alternative form…

A: As an alternative form… or in complementarity with the other forms, with the allopathic form. That is, complementing the allopathic forms.

Q: What does allopathic medicine bring then?

A: Allopathic medicine is very suitable in emergency situations, in accident situations, when there is no longer the luxury of time, and of long, reparative processes, and without it, obviously, we couldn't manage, that is very clear to me. However, the problem of allopathic medicine is the lack of a holistic vision of the human body. That is, the doctor who deals with bones, he only knows about bones, he doesn't really know about the rest anymore…

Q: Isn't this holism a fad, a toy?

A: No. No, let's isolate for example a terrifying disease of our century: cancer.

Q: And of the last century.

A: And of the last century. Cancer, tumors, everything related to… those people, those patients die in agony, let's be clear. So, comas… when a person goes into a coma and has cancer, it comes to morphine, let's not hide behind our finger, ok? Well, we, even after so many decades, do not have a cure for this thing and…

Q: A cure for cancer or for the pain?

A: A cure for cancer per se, and, in the case of those who are so-called healed, actually, what does it mean that they are healed? It means that the cancer has not returned within a period of five years, after the end of chemotherapy. But if you look at the person's organism and look at the functions of the organs, after going through chemotherapy or radiotherapy, they are in very bad shape afterwards. So the degradation of the functions of the organism of an individual healed of cancer resembles anything but holism. That is, we eliminated that two-centimeter or three-centimeter tumor in the case where it is localized, or the cells in the system, in the case where it is not localized. But? What do we do? Do we only look at what we eliminated and that we got rid of cancer, or do we also look a bit at the ravages and side effects around that tumor? Where is the holism in all of this? Aren't we trying to find a better therapy? Aren't we trying to prevent better? Aren't we trying to change the diet a bit? Aren't we trying to prevent at the level of pollution and so on…

Q: Give me some proofs of holism.

A: Well, the proof is very simple, it's in the pudding, as the English say (laughs). You look at all the people who are considered healed, or who no longer have that disease, and it is observed that in fact – yes – they no longer have that disease, but overall they are much worse off than before they were healed. The side effects are enormous. Now, if you take any stronger medication and look a bit at the leaflet and go to the side effects section, you will see that this medication can cause the

following effects: dizziness, diarrhea…

Q: Where are those who were healed holistically?

A: There are such cases and people…

Q: An example or two…

A: I wrote in my book, I took nine cases, these are real people, I even put pictures there – of healings, from my point of view, ho-lis-ti-cal. And some of the conditions were even conditions considered chronic in our Western medicine, and the healing was without side effects, without secondary effects.

Q: Where is the holism?

A: The holism is in the fact that you don't repair the heart, but you destroy the liver; you don't repair some infection with an antibiotic, but afterwards the liver takes three months to recover. That is what holistic means.

Q: We heal holistically. What is it like to live holistically?

A: Well, here is another level, another league we are playing in: prevention, and this requires, from my point of view, daily practice. Just as we have time for daily personal hygiene, so-called external, like the morning shower, brushing teeth, personal evening hygiene and so on, in my opinion we should allocate time for this internal personal hygiene. It's as if we were to say, I don't have time to meditate because… but that means you don't have time for mental or emotional hygiene.

Q: Why weren't we taught about such hygiene in school?

A: Actually yes, we were taught, we, as humanity. I remember morning calisthenics. Morning calisthenics, back before the Revolution (1989), from my point of view, was a very good thing.

Q: Yes, but we are talking about the other hygiene, why weren't we prepared from a young age for a "practice" we keep talking about, for "meditation", for spiritual and physical amelioration? It doesn't happen routinely in the East either. Let's not imagine that people…

A: No, in China traditions are being lost, in India traditions are being lost…

Q: In the old days there was no school, school wasn't made for everyone, now more or less school is made for everyone, education for everyone. Why don't these things start to be done in school, if they are so important?!

A: Well, I know schools where meditation is done.

Q: For example.

A: In America there are schools where meditation is done, in the sense of sitting…

Q: On an experimental basis.

A: No. There are programs for… athletes, there are many trained athletes, first their mind is trained to win, after which their body is trained to win. So if in their mind they don't win, you can do physical training 15 hours a day, because if in your mind you consider yourself a loser as an athlete, the chances of winning decrease, drastically. Because you don't perceive yourself as a

winner, and then the coaches, lately, the new wave of coaches, start – they have a psychologist, a mindset coach, that's what it's called, who takes care that the mental space of the athlete is just as well prepared or better prepared than the parameters of his body, the physical parameters. So these exist, they are no longer things from the realm of SF, these are things that are applied in all branches that require high performance, or performance…

Q: Here we are talking about pragmatism. What about the Universe? In quotes and with a capital letter. We were talking about this type of education, not just for performance, in practical life.

A: It seems to me that at the corporate level there are more and more personal development and self-esteem raising trainings, much greater emphasis is placed within human resources departments on how you perceive yourself, not on the skills you have…

Q: Okay, but is this corporate spirit a model? Necessarily?

A: Here's what trainings were like 20 years ago. 20 years ago, if you were in IT, you had to learn programming and everything that meant training, programs coming from HR, were on the pattern of "let's develop skills." We don't develop the person, we develop the skills for which we pay the person, ok? Now it's not like that anymore. Now the person is also developed. So, the HR people have finally understood that if that person does not feel good in the company, or does not feel good in the family, the company has a problem. They understood that overall the effects and performance of the entire company increases if, for example, those people meditate 15 minutes a day. Or if people know how to do anger management. Or if people know, for example, how to manage difficult people in meetings. Does this have anything to do with IT, and with programming? Well, not really. This is already a first step, how should I say, a first shift, which is happening even at the business level, which is very pragmatic. If the business environment is not pragmatic, I don't know who else is pragmatic in this world. Much too pragmatic sometimes. So if this shift is happening here, if we then look at schools, at kindergartens, at camps – children's camp programs, there are these workshops that take place, it's enough to look on Facebook to see the workshops for children. There is a shift, people realize that there is a need to train not only the body, but also

the mind, the emotions. And this is achieved very easily through meditation. Studies show that the left cerebral hemisphere is responsible for everything related to the exact sciences, and the right hemisphere is responsible for the humanities, for creation. Our problem at the moment is no longer mathematics and physics, our problem is creativity. So we are at a point where we need the right hemisphere more than the left hemisphere. In 1900, yes, we needed the left hemisphere: we needed engineers, the transition was made from blue collar to white collar, from blue collars to white collars, and then yes, there was a need for engineers, for mathematics, for designers, for lawyers… now who are the best paid? Designers, people who know how to come up with an innovation, with an invention, who know how to create, to generate disruptiveness, disruptive technologies. Look in this mobile industry, or social media industry, you can in six months push aside MySpace and become Facebook. And this happens in six months, because someone created the same thing – a social network – but so differently and so disruptively, that it bankrupted the one who was in first place at that time. And this happened in a span of six months. The same in mobile. Today you can be in first place, in a year you can be in last place.

Q: Have these innovators necessarily been influenced by spiritual disciplines, even if they are not done in schools?

A: …well look at Steve Jobs. Who is the most… he is the quintessence of what I want to say now.

Q: What can be said about him?

A: Steve Jobs was a man who was very successful from a business point of view, with the products he created. You think of the iPhone, you think of the Mac, you think of the iPod, right? iPad and so on. But, at the same time, he came from the New Age world, he came from the esoteric world. He had very strong connections with everything that means New Age. All his photographs in his autobiography, from his youth, show him sitting in lotus. Let's take The Beatles…

Q: Let's not go to artists…

A: …it's showbiz, still showbiz. It's all business there too.

Q: Yes, but we were talking about innovation and invention.

A: Good, so from my point of view, Steve Jobs seems the most representative to me.

Q: Do we have certainty that he reached a level of consciousness, let's say, through practices…

A: Yes, I think it helped him…

Q: By the way: of Asian origin.

A: I think this thing helped him.

Q: Why do you think so?

A: He states… there are countless passages in his autobiography that confirm what I am saying here. The fact that he wanted… for example, how he expressed it, if I remember, "I just wanted… I just wanted through my products, for the Universe to blink a little." How does that quote seem to you? Look at his keynotes. Everything that means the keynotes for launching new products, from my point of view, are nothing more than exercises in creating the fan base, the base of fans. What that man was doing there with his keynotes is called leader following. So he was creating an audience of fans, of followers, he was creating the leadership to generate that audience of followers. He doesn't just want to sell and be successful, and to raise Apple's shares, he wanted to be loved too, he wanted his products to be loved, he wanted to have a fan base that was much

more elitist than the challenger at that time, which was Microsoft, with PCs.

Q: Steve Jobs died.

A: Yes… the irony of fate is that…

Q: Where did he go wrong?

A: He went wrong, in my opinion, at the moment when he managed to heal himself in a first phase, because with him there was remission the whole time, and he didn't give up the job. So he was healed, and then continued the corporate spiral and the illness returned and so on. The second time he went wrong when he made two contradictory decisions, in the sense that he went alternative and then went back to allopathic again. And he went alternative, and went back to allopathic again. However, in pancreatic cancer you cannot afford to change treatments when you have six months left to live. You either go one way, or you go the other way. And once you've made the decision, you stick to it.

Q: Good, his success, because we took him as an example, is his success limited to what happened here, on Earth? What happened to him after? Where is he now?

A: That is a question I don't know how to answer, I cannot answer and I do not want to answer, but, if I take his activity on Earth, during the time he lived, between the moment of birth and the moment of death, from my point of view, this man, as a result of the New Age current during his youth, left something behind, he created some products that changed the world, he raised the standard level of devices to a level that no other player in this IT ecosystem has managed.

Q: We're talking about evolution at the level of communication technology. Why this evolution, this development, when, in fact, everything is within us, we have paranormal abilities, as you said,

we can communicate directly through telepathy… why don't we develop these abilities… why is this [technological] development necessary…

A: I'll tell you immediately why technological development is necessary. Because I believe that repetitive arithmetic operations should be done by computers, and we should only interpret the results. I don't think our human brain is put to good use by making it multiply two six-digit numbers by hand on a piece of paper. I don't think that's a good way to use our brain. I think that's what computing power is for, right now, which can handle this, and the brain should be reserved only for the part of interpreting and creating from these results. Let me give you a very clear example: an airplane, when it flies from Bucharest to Beijing, passes through several control towers. Those control towers, if they didn't have radars, and the radars if they didn't have a computer behind them, it would be very difficult for those planes not to collide in the flight corridors. However, no matter how good you are as a human, no matter how sharp your mind is, you cannot replace the computing power of a computer with the human brain. That's point one.

Point two. I believe that in fields like physics, this research… for example, that accelerator at CERN, it's all about computing power. If that computing power didn't exist, it would be useless to build that accelerator however many kilometers long, it wouldn't be good for anything. In medicine, there are a lot of devices – allopathic medicine – which wouldn't exist without computers. And I'm referring essentially to digital devices. There would be no CT scanner, MRI, radiotherapy – all these things usually have, behind them, a supercomputer, a super processor, super software, a super algorithm. They wouldn't have become a reality without the computing power of computers. The internet, similarly, wouldn't exist, it's our simplest way of communication, access, and so on… so, in layman's terms (laughs). It wouldn't exist without computers, without this computing power, right? Look, think not of the computer, but of the computer's satellite devices. For example, a mouse. How much did a mouse ease the work with the computer. You move a device on a table and the cursor moves on the screen and when you get where you want, you click. Instead of remembering commands with the switch and all sorts of complicated topics.

Q: Let's go back a bit to SF. What was the combination there of advanced technology and practices with one's own body and spirit. How was this coherence explained?

A: It was a non-technologized environment, it was rather medieval, but it had elements of hi-tech.

Q: For example.

A: For example, I remember that at one point there was a device that penetrated Paul's room to kill him. And this device was supposed to detect movements, micro-movements, any micro-movement in the room and was going to poison him… and Paul being trained, of course he stayed still, he was trained in sitting, so he could control his blinks and all the micro-movements of his organism, and he escaped that assassination attempt…

Q: So the technology was not in his service, but against him.

A: Exactly.

Q: Where did this technology come from?

A: The enemies… there were two families fighting each other. And there are several devices, right?… It was a combination of feudal and high-tech there, but more towards feudal.

Q: Okay, let's go back a bit. Yoga followed SF, but what was before SF? In your own development...

A: I don't remember in my childhood having a… I used to fall more easily into these states of being, like, I would sit and stare into the distance. I also had a very beautiful view from where I lived, my balcony looked exactly towards the F. mountains, and you couldn't help but get carried away and stare out the window for minutes on end…

Q: But everyone does that.

A: I had this state of being, I couldn't say anything else… Ah! There would be something to mention…

Q: What state of being?

A: The state of being was this state where I forgot myself, somehow. I forgot that I exist and it was just… I could call them con-tem-plative states. Not meditative and not concentration. This is a lower level, this part of contemplativeness. However, I had a problem with my own body. I wasn't born healthy, I was born at eight months, I had perforated ventricles, oxygenated blood mixed with non-oxygenated blood, I got tired very quickly, I had a rather aggressive anemia for two years, so, all the time, my body forced me to keep a grip of consciousness on the body. The body didn't let me ignore it. Which I believe is a very important factor in my subsequent searches. Because everything I practiced and sought, it was important for it to be connected to the body and its health.

Q: And you got to… where?

A: At the moment I'm okay with my body. I don't have any kind of illness, I haven't been sick for many years, I like it, my body's constitution and functions are okay, overall I'm satisfied with my state of…

Q: What did you do then… the first things you did then…

A: The first things I did then were related to Yoga, mobility, I changed my diet a bit too, in the sense that I became lacto-ovo-vegetarian for the time being. Not necessarily the best decision, given that I was going through puberty at that moment. So lacto-ovo-vegetarianism was a radical

change, the most radical change, and this happened around '94-'95-'96, my mother had to cook twice, for me and for the rest of the family, so it was a small revolution in my family, the fact that I became lacto-ovo-vegetarian. And I prevented everything related to smoking, those vices of adolescence. I didn't smoke, I didn't drink coffee, I didn't drink alcohol, I had decades where I didn't touch a drop of beer or wine.

Q: Why?

A: I didn't need it, I didn't feel the need to fill my lungs with cigarette smoke, my liver with alcohol, and my kidneys with coffee. Because I knew – my body was weakened at that time. So I knew that my body's functions were not okay. And that I had to do something to balance them. I also had an accelerated growth, in the sense that I grew, in the summer between seventh and eighth grade, by a head! Now, this growth brings anemia, clearly, and I had an aggressive anemia for three years. Do you know what aggressive anemia means? I don't know if you've read about the subject, but basically you turn white, your knees go weak and you have to sit down after running or walking faster for five minutes. But all this was resolved after I started practicing and having a grip on my own body. I had another problem while doing Yoga – I did nine years of Yoga – with gaining weight. I couldn't put any muscle mass on me at all. I was tall, I was athletic, but I had no muscle mass. I was permanently weakened, permanently devitalized.

Q: Let's leave for the next chapter, for the next discussion… how you started, how you moved from idea to practice.

A: Okay, so the question was, if I remember correctly, what happened after I started practicing. This happened, in short, in the sense that at the moment I consider that my state of health, my state of wellness is due to these things. The fact that I haven't been in the hospital not even one day (emphasizes) and the fact that I haven't stayed in bed not even one day, in the last 20 years, I say that this is something due to these practices and prevention.

Q: We will find out how, what you did from the beginning until today, in the next discussions.

4. The Yoga School (I)

[30.07.13]

Q: We continue. The beginning was linked to the SF readings, the theme of initiation from the SF readings, after which you got to Yoga, but we need to know… did you somehow have a religious, spiritual education before?

A: My mother and father were not churchgoers, therefore there wasn't much religion in the family at home, however my grandparents were, both my paternal grandparents and the others, on my mother's side – especially my grandmother, I learned my first prayer in the countryside, there you can't sleep if you don't say your prayer, you can't eat if you don't say the prayer, and going to church. And the grandmother on my mother's side, who lived in the same city as us, didn't insist that we say prayers at the table or before bed, but she did read to us from the Bible, she told us stories from the Bible. The characters in the Bible, the events in the Bible. Instead of stories, fairy tales, she told us from the Bible. And I remember this at four years, five years, six years – so before school. But I don't think I had a very religious family.

Q: A first question is: through this religious education did you come to believe in God?

A: (after a long pause): I don't think I believed in God, as a child, I don't even think I was aware if it exists or not… no. As a child I didn't believe. It was an abstract figure, let's say… God… no. An old man with white hair and a beard, that's about it.

Q: Was it totally parallel with the SF readings, or…

A: That started later, with the SF readings, I'm talking about childhood – four, five, six, seven

years, up to the fourth, fifth, sixth grade, there really was no case for religion. At 12 the Revolution happened, so I was born in '77, in '89 was the Revolution. After that I can say I had more contact with religion, in the sense that it was discussed a bit more freely and my grandmother on my mother's side was no longer afraid to talk so openly… But once again: no. We went to church after the Revolution for Easter and Christmas, and that's about it… and these important events: baptisms, weddings, funerals.

Q: Okay, and during the SF readings were there memories related to this education, this religious culture?

A: I didn't associate the SF readings with religion, instead, given that extraordinary opening towards esotericism after '89, which is totally different from religious education, the fact that you read esoteric works and believe in a supernatural force, you cultivate your reading in the sense of consuming esotericism, that doesn't mean you are a religious person in the true sense of the word. I know there were some books by René Guénon, if I remember correctly, he was doing this kind of… he wanted to scientifically prove that God exists, or to draw a parallel between science and religion, or to find the common points between science and religion, so – that's more how I started to investigate, but to believe I started to believe after I started practicing Yoga, practically.

Q: …to believe in God…

A: Yes, to believe in the true sense of the word "God".

Q: What is God?

A: From the point of view of a practitioner, because religiously, Christian-Orthodox, I have no competence, but I'm speaking simply through the prism of a person who has practiced Eastern techniques since he was young, since 16.

Q: For example.

A: Breathing exercises, body postures…

Q: The disciplines being…

A: Yoga, Taiji, Qigong, a little Zen, a bit of martial arts, maybe a bit of astrology… so all these things, essentially, make you at some point believe that there is something beyond matter, beyond the material. Yes, I think that's the most interesting explanation, it's – the most faithful one, which I felt then, at that age, at 16-17 years. Something that was beyond matter, above the material.

Q: But beyond death?

A: Ehh, this thing with reincarnation and these discussions appeared much later, I don't even want to approach that subject now because it's very detailed, but, this part about beyond death appeared much later, after this conviction appeared that there is something beyond matter and the material. And I think this is the natural succession: firstly, man believes that there is something, a universal force, which has a universal wisdom, after that he asks the question, ok, but after death what will happen, this force in which I believe, in fact, what thoughts does it have about me, or what plans does it have for me or what will happen to me… That's the natural order, it seems to me, because if you don't believe in God, you don't believe there is an afterlife either. If you don't believe in a form of God, there is no expectation that there might be something beyond death, an afterlife, or "life after".

Q: Yoga. How did you start Yoga?

A: It was during a summer vacation, somewhere in August, I saw a poster, on a pole, in a provincial town of 17 thousand inhabitants…

Q: What town?

A: C. …on which it said "Yoga": meditations, asanas, body postures, and so on. Back then there were no ads with women in bras (laughs), so that one may say I was attracted by the woman in a bra. They were simply some A5 sheets, black and white, stuck where announcements usually were stuck for the next movie at the cinema, for the football match next Friday, so in the place where the town's specific advertising was, and there was also a new poster, for Yoga. The time, hall, and place were given. And I went to that event. There were about 10-12 people there, a bearded gentleman at a desk, in front. They were very familiar with each other, I entered there like that, a bit foreign to the whole story. I understood they had been to a camp at the seaside and were talking about how nice it was, and it was proposed to do a meditation. Actually – it was a musical audition with eyes closed, rather (laughs). Now, looking back, I can't classify it as meditation (emphasizes). It was simply a musical audition with eyes closed, that's what I did at least, I didn't do anything else. I closed my eyes, music was heard from the speakers of a cassette player, esoteric music, like: Enya, Vangelis and by the way, spiritual music is a chapter in itself that we need to discuss, about spiritual sounds and spiritual music. Klaus Schulze, Vangelis, Enya and so on. That music sounded very good… Jean Michel Jarre, right? I can't say I liked it, nor that I disliked what happened in the 15-minute musical audition, but it was very clear to me that I was curious, it was very clear that I didn't really have another option to have contact with this thing. And, therefore, I said, "what the heck", I'll go. And the course started in the first week of October, at the hall. There were some classes, where some postures were taught, everyone came with their little blanket. It was a warm-up routine, you warmed up your spine, from top to bottom, from the cervical vertebrae to the lower joints, after that we entered the program of asanas, of actual body postures, at the end a kind of relaxation was done lying on the floor, and everyone went home happy and clear-headed, of course, after the new lesson. This was at every weekly session, a written lesson was received, about four pages long, and a new body posture.

Q: Did you have a goal practicing Yoga?

A: No. I did what I was told. I went to training and I wanted to see what it was about, believing

myself that… at this training, holding a body posture motionless for five-six-seven-eight minutes, ten minutes, was a bit like Frank Herbert's training, Dune (laughs). It was nothing like that, but you left there very recharged, like, with a good, quite…

Q: Well, were you part of… did you feel part of an initiation?

A: The instructor didn't tell me: this is initiation. It was a new lesson. It was more of a teacher-student relationship, that Yoga instructor in turn was only in his second or third year of Yoga, somewhere at S., a city about eight kilometers from C., he wasn't much more advanced than us, but… being the only one from C. who was in the highest year at S., he was the instructor at C., right? And he had no "guru-ish" pretensions or mannerisms…

Q: He didn't, but how did you feel?

A: It was very okay after the respective sessions, it was very calming, it was… you effectively took a break, you broke away from all these daily problems – family, siblings, school, you went there and for an hour you practiced body postures. It was like a kind of gymnastics much slower, much more restful than an hour of sports.

Q: How long did you practice there?

A: Well, if I started in ninety-three… at 16 years old, from October '93 until July '94. After that I went to S., I didn't stay in C. anymore and I learned with the instructor's teacher, so to speak (laughs). And after that I came to Bucharest, applying to university. I got into university, I came to Bucharest, I continued the courses in Bucharest. Up to the fourth or fifth year of Yoga…

Q: In what year?

A: ...it was engaging, I went with pleasure… the sixth-seventh-eighth year, I went more out of inertia. However, in these years I also saw, moving to Bucharest… that's when the first contacts with the "guru-ish" accents of such a community appeared. In the sense that it was totally different from what it was in S. or in C., the instructors had something to prove, they had a status to defend, this relationship was a bit more imposed… meaning the teacher didn't want to be a simple teacher, he had to be…

Q: Where did you practice?

A: It was held at the "Steaua" Club, the "Steaua" sports hall actually, near the Radio Hall, towards the North Station. A large, huge hall. I think we were 200 people in the hall, when we got to these classes. It was a very strong thing, very powerful, through the prism of the group experience, like a feeling of belonging, those people knew what they were doing there – the leaders, they knew what they were developing, the issue was very studied and I can say that group was a well-welded group, it was a well-articulated group, in Bucharest. In S. and C. it was more romantic, more idealistic, but in Bucharest it was a quite well-knit thing with very clear goals. For example: one of the goals was to have energies of as high a vibration as possible. Now, I know it sounds like wooden language, but the idea was to… your body and what you emanated and the state you were in to be as elevated as possible, as calm as possible, as harmonious as possible, on all planes of life – social, individual, erotic, volitional, professional, intellectual and so on. All these planes were addressed. And, indeed, the notion of "liberation" had begun to take shape, which has to do with what happens after death…

Q: It became clearer, for you…

A: It became clearer for me. Everything I'm telling, I'm telling subjectively, meaning I don't know how it was for the others, but for me, this idea with this goal related to liberation, to samadhi, to cosmic consciousness or meditation that continues into a prolonged state of cosmic consciousness had begun to become quite clear. Now, I skipped a very important episode between S. and Bucharest: while I was in S., I came to two conferences in Bucharest, which were held at the

Polytechnic, at "Leu", in a conference hall, and it was about Tantra. They were the first conferences related to sexuality and for the first time I heard this connection between sexuality and spirituality, which was absolutely…

Q: Paradoxical, contradictory?

A: Paradoxical, contradictory, and conspiratorial at the same time. This whole meeting was held at night; it would start somewhere around 11-12 at night and last until 5-6 the next morning, and that's where I saw for the first time... the leader of the Yoga movement, V. My first contact with him was in a context where he had an extremely alpha posture, being the one holding the conference – you know how it is, the one on stage, the one who speaks has the alpha posture. He would read from those papers, do a meditation, then read from papers again, do another meditation. Very interesting and revolutionary information for me.

Q: What year is it?

A: It was in '96, so a year before I started university. It was very complicated, I had to leave home, my parents didn't really let me. So the whole logistics of attending these two conferences on Tantra were an effort, like a... well, he kept people waiting, V., he was always late, and while he was late, there was a certain V.R. who kept the atmosphere going... and in the hall, I think there were 500 people – men, because these conferences were held separately, separate for men, separate for women. So this distinction was very clear...

Q: Why?

A: Well, there were elements of Tantrism, of sexuality, which... it made no sense for a woman to be in the hall if there were things that needed to be practiced by men, and vice versa, it made no sense for a man to be in the hall if things were being taught for women.

Q: Okay, but these instructions had to converge at some point...

A: Well, it wasn't as some might imagine; the information wasn't strictly related to sex. Or even to sexual education. There was a lot of discussion about notions like ojas. Ojas was a kind of... it's a Hindu concept that says you can transmute sexual potential into spiritual energy, into spiritual potential, let's say. And this idea of continence was propagated: making love without ejaculating, basically. A distinction was also made between orgasm and ejaculation, namely the fact that a man can have an orgasm without ejaculating, and that between them there is a point of no return and that you must not pass that point of no return to ejaculate. Techniques were taught to control this transition from orgasm to ejaculation... sorry, to control the avoidance of ejaculation, so staying only in the orgasm phase and not surpassing that point of no return, and this didn't necessarily have much to do with the sexual act itself. They were practices that normally helped you become sexually continent, as a man. I don't know what happened with the women then. And the purpose of all this was also pragmatic at the same time, in the sense that men practically had to manage to bring the woman to orgasm multiple times, which we know was a big problem back then, there were problems of... and they still exist now, if you go to psychotherapy offices, it's the same problem: premature ejaculation, women are frigid, they don't have orgasms, so they are classic problems, right? Sexual. Well, and this Tantrism, this training, would also solve this problem, the fulfillment of the woman, and so on. It was also promoted as a contraceptive method. A slightly irresponsible promotion from my point of view, because we all know that not ejaculating doesn't... you can't avoid a pregnancy, and many pregnancies happened because of this, I think. So that was the episode, the transition from S. to Bucharest. And when I came to Bucharest, of course, all these conferences were much more accessible. And in the first year of my stay in Bucharest, I had a few months – six, seven, eight months, I don't remember exactly – in which, during my first year of university, I lived in an ashram. It was located at ”IMGB” (former industrial facility). Somewhere after the last metro station.

Q: Can you describe life in an ashram?

A: Well, I shared a room with a (male) colleague. H. could visit me (laughs). It was no problem.

We had some duties related to cleaning and so on. Periodic duties. Every two weeks or once a week you had to clean the hallway. You had to... you didn't have to, that's actually why you went to the ashram: you had time for practice and the context was provided for practice, in the sense that... you know how it is, in a student dorm there are usually parties, noise... at night... on weekends. Here it was quiet, it was more suitable for... other than that, nothing special.

Q: How many people were in the ashram?

A: At that time, at ”IMGB”... 10-15, something like that. It was a former workers' dorm, basically, which the Yoga movement had rented for those who wanted to stay there.

Q: Where were all the other practitioners at the same time?

A: There were several ashrams. There were ashrams in the Ferentari area, and in the Obor area, so it wasn't the only ashram, but for practice, those in the ashram would also go to class on weekends. Classes were usually held on weekends, Saturday, around 10, 11 o'clock. You went to "class," as it were. The Yoga class. Well, and this thing went on for about nine years. You had a membership card, you paid a monthly fee, so it was a proper enterprise.

Q: Your affiliation was as a student in this thing?

A: Yes, my affiliation in the sense of a student, a simple student. I didn't have any other... I wasn't an instructor or... I went to learn, I went with my little blanket under my arm, I sat there nicely in my spot and learned.

Q: What did you learn?

A: Weeell... I don't remember exactly what was taught each year, but the first two or three years are very clear. There were the asanas, the bodily postures, there were breathing exercises – the so-called pranayama. I'm talking about in the hall. There were purification exercises, the kriyas, that's what they were called, the most powerful being nauli. It was actually a breathing exercise and also a movement exercise. You also received some mantras...

Q: What is a mantra?

A: Mantras; yantras – which were those drawings.

Q: Yes, which are the practitioner's tools?

A: The first and most readily available tool was the breath. That's where the whole discussion started. And the most important breath was the complete yogic breath. That's what it was called and it taught you how to fill your lungs from bottom to top with air, fully. After that, another tool was related to mantras, these were a kind of sounds, some syllables, which you received upon being initiated, they were considered secret, actually they're not that secret, because if you look for them, you can find them on Google now, they were also in books. Well, and the idea was that during meditation you would use these mantras, recite them mentally, emit these mantras mentally, and receive back a response, a vibration, which could even manifest sonically, in the inner ear, you would perceive something phonic, something sonic, in various ranges, on different harmonies, so at some point these sounds became, like, "sound within sound," and you would fix your attention on what came back, after you entered the mantra. It was actually a form of concentration, right? In which you used the emission of a syllable. And yantras: a practice tool, yantras were a kind of drawings, a kind of diagrams, which were also used as an object of concentration, this time you meditated with your eyes open and fixed on the center of the yantra, of the drawing, of that particular sketch, so that you would observe what that yantra transmitted back to you as a state, as energy, what it reflected in you. At some point, it was also a bit of auto-suggestion, but it was also something that wasn't entirely up to you as a result, so... you were also kind of self-hypnotizing, but not 100%, there was also something independent from your own

imagination and visualization. Well, with yantras it was a bit more complicated, in the sense that at some point you had to close your eyes and visually reproduce the yantra, to see if you could remember it with your eyes closed and visualize it with your eyes closed, which, from my point of view, was an extraordinarily powerful exercise, extraordinarily powerful. There was also another very interesting exercise, which was done with a ping-pong ball, which was placed in front of the forehead, you fixed your gaze on it, tried to retain as many details as possible – diameter, light, and so on. You closed your eyes and visualized it. And this gesture was considered an extremely powerful gesture for activating the third eye, a technique I would encounter in various forms and variations later in Buddhism and Daoism, when I started traveling in China.

Q: The third eye – what is it?

A: The third eye is that point between the eyebrows, anthropologically it is located there, but actually I would find out later that it's not necessarily the point or the geometric location, but rather the function of an area on the forehead, a function that actually creates that "third eye." It is said that in normal people the third eye is closed, and to open it you must practice, to create that function, to "see with the third eye." To make the third eye see, first you must train, you must practice.

Q: For what?

A: The third eye is very much connected to clairvoyance, to this superior intelligence, to genius, in a sense, to telepathy. Things that already border on the paranormal, in one way or another. That is, with the awakening of a latent potential through practice.

Q: Let's go back to terms: paranormal... or do they belong to the field of parapsychology?

A: Yes, it somehow belongs to the field of parapsy... there was a lot of reference to the

paranormal and parapsychology in the class. However, I didn't see anything, not one demonstration, in all those years, in those nine years, I didn't see a single paranormal demonstration, I didn't see any paranormal phenomenon, out of the ordinary, out of the daily, out of the normal of ordinary people, I didn't see anything like that...

Q: So what did your development mean during these nine years?

A: Well, first of all, I think the biggest gain in those nine years was the connection to my own body, to the functions of my organs, to the holistic perception between body, heart, and mind, and, somehow, the creation of this suggestion, or conviction – this auto-suggestion that the body is nothing but a shell, a garment, a container, for what is beyond the body and beyond matter, in essence (laughs). It's like a temple, let's say. The body had become a temple, that's why you had to take care of it, for example, not to eat toxins: meat, coffee, alcohol. So to give and offer the body what it needs to keep itself healthy.

Q: Did you manage to do this?

A: Well, I was a lacto-ovo-vegetarian for those nine years, I practiced those asanas which provide very good flexibility of the joints, tendons, and muscles... I could hold positions that now, clearly, I can no longer hold (laughs), it offered a certain peace, a calming of the breath, of the heart... as a teenager I didn't have problems with anxiety, depression, discouragement, although I see now that they are very common, states of loneliness, rejection, anxiety, aversion, are very common in young people today. I mean, they are acute, they are heightened at the level of today's youth. In the yoga population of that time, these things didn't exist...

Q: No form of dependency?

A: No. Dependency on the training, yes, because at some point the practice became extremely

important and extremely... it had a central place in everyone's daily ritual. The day couldn't pass without practice. So a dependency on practice existed, in a sense. But not other kinds... plants, or little plants, or substances...

Q: Or a dependency on other people?

A: I know that dependency on other people existed, however, it never manifested in me, ever.

Q: What is it about?

Q: Whether it's a Yoga group or any other type of group, a sense of belonging develops, it gets created. And I think that people who are a bit more impressionable, a bit more unstable, a bit lacking in self-confidence, a bit more "beta," need that sense of belonging to a group. I don't think it was directly because it was a Yoga group. It was because it was a group. Not a Yoga group – that distinction matters. In any group, this dependency on others forms. A circle of friends, high school classmates, university colleagues, workmates – all of these are mini-groups, mini-communities, which create a sense of belonging.

Q: But what about dependency on the instructor, or the guru?

A**:** No. That was something the media amplified, and from that perspective I really saw what media manipulation means: if you repeat the same thing ten thousand times – even if it's a lie – eventually it becomes "truth." Mao Zedong said that. And if you repeat it across multiple channels, it gets accepted even faster as truth. I don't believe there was a dependency between student and instructor, not a pathological dependency in that sense. I think the press greatly exaggerated it. Of course, I'm sure there were some cases of kids or teenagers who were ostracized at home and came to Bucharest to live in an ashram, trying to escape families that were depraved or violent. I don't deny that. But those "kids" were 18, 19, 20, 25 years old. You can't really call them kids anymore; they were adults wanting to get away from home. If their father smoked a pack of

cigarettes a day in the house, maybe the young yogi just had enough and left…

Q **:** So it was more of an independent choice, a new social path…

A**:** Exactly, you can't label that as dependency.

Q**:** Not dependency, no – more of a search, but still – and we'll get to this in the next chapter – there were forms of adulation, of personality cult…

A**:** Well, by that point I had already left the course. We're talking about 2004, the year I decided I didn't want to continue anymore. From then on, everything I knew about the course came from the press (he emphasizes this) – and from friends who stayed. So I don't know how qualified I am to talk about what was happening inside, but I can talk about how I perceived it from the outside. And my decision to leave was precisely because of the extremely aggressive media campaigns, and also because of what I considered the somewhat exaggerated behavior of the movement's leaders. They lacked tact, diplomacy, and patience, and were too… let's say, defiant. When you know that society isn't ready for certain taboos, isn't ready to talk about certain taboos, you don't go and deliberately provoke it, amplifying things and almost spiting society. You take a longer-term, more diplomatic approach. This year you introduce one thing, two years later another… but you don't jump straight into "Miss contests" – as they called them – these marathon events lasting four or five hours, with women parading naked on stage, or in swimsuits. I think that was a mistake on the leaders' part. But at the same time, it was also a fight. A fight between the press and probably various political interests, and this movement which was clearly gaining more traction and social influence, with messages that were quite openly anti-system. Let's be honest: the messages were anti-system. You did things others didn't – for example, not eating meat – and the reasoning behind it was clear: toxins, morality, not killing a living being, and so on. And that could easily be perceived, politically, as anti-system.

I don't know exactly what happened, what negotiations or deals were made, but from the press's reaction it was obvious someone was orchestrating the smear campaign. And it was just as obvious that the leaders' response was totally undiplomatic. With a bit of pacing – like in tango – probably,

little by little, these ideas could have been introduced and accepted in society. Which is in fact what happened later. By 2012–2013, things like raw food, tantric sexuality, downshifting, financial freedom, spiritual freedom – none of these were a problem anymore. Nobody in the press criticized you for talking about them. But in 2003–2005, they *were* a problem. And it took about ten years of gradual progress and acceptance for those things to stop being scandalous. So back in 2004–2005 I said "enough," and I tried to reorient myself toward practices more rooted in Chinese and Japanese culture. That's what interested me most at that point, and for me the transition was quite clear.

5. **The Yoga School (II)**
   [7 August 2013]

Q**:** What is – or rather, what was and what is – Y. [the Yoga school]?

A**:** Y. was… or rather, it *used to be*, since it no longer exists, the largest movement representing Yoga in Romania, from the '90s up until around 2000–2004. Up until the point when V., the movement's leader – or president… well, "leader," because officially he stepped down as president of Y. – was arrested, following procedures that were more than dubious in terms of judicial fairness.

Q**:** How did that happen? Did the arrest have any real basis?

A**:** No, listen – after that arrest, several events followed, and in the end he was granted asylum in S. Now, how the abuse itself unfolded…

Q**:** Why do you say the procedure was dubious and abusive?

A**:** Well, first of all because V. was perceived as a political threat – at least, that was both my impression and the public's impression at the time – since he had enormous influence back then.

The movement counted tens of thousands of practitioners. Those “spirals” were a massive phenomenon, and no politician could make sense of them. If he spoke badly about a certain politician – or positively – his followers were, in one way or another, receptive to his opinion. Sometimes he backed it up with arguments, sometimes not, but often enough he did. In practice, he was seen as a danger in terms of social influence. Let’s not forget: Y. was also something quite critical at the mass social level.

Now, why do I call it abuse? Because I was living two streets away from one of his apartments, the very one where the masked police stormed in, and I saw how the whole operation unfolded in the street, how the authorities behaved. The whole perimeter was sealed off like it was some nuclear site, there were explosions, trucks full of masked officers, and dozens of them storming the property at 7–8 in the morning. I’ve never seen anything like that in Romania since. Maybe similar things happen in raids on drug cartels, organized crime, prostitution networks, and so on. The accusations were serious, from what I understood – tax evasion, sex with minors, and so on – but these were tried in absentia. From what I know, in some cases he was acquitted, in others convicted, but all in his absence. From a justice perspective, I don’t see how that could be fair. Plus, let’s not forget: S., one of the most advanced democracies, granted him asylum. If S. gives you asylum, clearly there’s a problem.

Q**:** But why do you say the whole operation – from the order down to the way the arrest was staged – was an abuse?

A**:** Because I think there were political agreements in place until then. I don’t have clear proof, but when you’re at the level Y. was, you don’t just act on your own. Someone talks to you, someone asks for a favor. At some point, I think that agreement fell apart. Either the terms were changed and one side refused, or the collaboration just stopped. And then the abuses started. Let’s not forget, the campaign had started years before, in the press. It was a coordinated effort by the authorities: first demonizing him, then demonizing the movement, isolating its members. There were discriminations – certain institutions wouldn’t hire you if they knew you were a yogi. If you said you were vegetarian, people immediately asked, “Ah, so you’re a yogi?” In 2000, society wasn’t ready. People looked at you funny if you said you were lacto-vegetarian.

So, all of this began well before that raid. And once again, I don't want this interview to sound like I'm defending V. or Y., because by then I was no longer part of it. But from the outside – as a former student – the whole procedure seemed very fishy to me. It didn't seem transparent, fair, or respectful of human rights. In fact, all the human rights organizations – from Freedom House to Amnesty International – condemned the way the authorities acted. Even Pro Democrația. There are tons of statements from that time supporting V. The only TV channel that gave him the right to reply – I remember seeing the interview – was Marius Tucă. That's it. So, no one invited him on a show to give him a right of reply after that release. First he was arrested, then released, and then again…

Q: We've talked about the police, judicial, and media tools that are either subservient to or simply belong to certain people or interest groups. Let's put it another way: who were the friends and who were the enemies in the political world?

A: (laughs) I think the friends… again, these are pure speculations and logical deductions, because, in the end, we are human and think logically. From what I observed, he was very close to the PSD, or that old PDSR, before Traian Băsescu won the elections, the CDR of Traian Băsescu… no, not CDR, the DA Alliance winning the elections. Now, I think a big role in Adrian Năstase's defeat… and there's a statement, black on white, by Adrian Năstase himself, saying that he lost because of Y. You have to look it up; there's a statement, an interview, I think there's even video evidence on YouTube if we search properly.

In those elections, after V. was persecuted and abused, from a judicial point of view—again, I'm not defending him, I don't know what he did with minors, I have no idea about the tax evasion issues—but strictly regarding the legal procedure, he was abused. I think at that time, many observers and members of the electoral commissions were actually people from Y. And they ensured the balance tipped in favor of the DA Alliance. I don't know if you remember, but Băsescu and the DA Alliance initially won by a hair. After that, complex negotiations were needed for Băsescu to… first of all, he won by a narrow margin, and then the appointment of the prime minister and a majority PD government, or the DA Alliance at the time, PD with PNL still needed PUR, Dan Voiculescu's party. Or the so-called "immoral solution." So they won all the spots by a

hair. I think any effort, any person who tilted the balance toward Traian Băsescu mattered in that election. Every vote counted. And I think it was enough for Y. members to be very careful not to alter vote counts or records to tilt the balance toward the DA Alliance. You don't need to falsify anything, just keep an eye open to prevent others from falsifying or manipulating.

Q: And this solidarity with Traian Băsescu—did it come as revenge against Adrian Năstase?

A: Exactly. Let's remember that with V. there was even an unfortunate name overlap with R., the other person convicted during the same period. Many speculated that V.'s conviction was orchestrated to cover up R.'s conviction, a prominent PSDR member at the time. Later, a journalistic investigation revealed… surprise… he was actually V.'s half-brother (laughs). That is, it was discovered that they shared the same father but had different mothers. This is somewhere in the press or hidden on the internet. So V. and R. were apparently brothers, half-brothers on their father's side. But starting from "friends and enemies," obviously, when the authorities at the time abused him, or when V. felt abused by those in power, he said, "okay, no problem, I got rid of Ceaușescu, I'll get rid of Năstase too." So they commanded, went into the polling stations, watched the vote counting, and did everything possible to make the other win. The problem was that a month after Traian Băsescu won, he gave a very clear statement saying, "Justice should do its job, including in V.'s case" (laughs). So, practically, after seeing himself victorious, Băsescu didn't push to protect V., and all the trials continued as normal.

Q: If the system was dysfunctional and subservient to politics during Năstase, how did it function under Băsescu? How did justice work?

A: Well, considering that Băsescu didn't intervene to defend him, I believe there were no more abuses under Băsescu, from a judicial point of view. However, the cases that started under Năstase couldn't simply disappear; all those files and collected evidence remained. You can't accuse Monica Macovei, who was in charge of the justice system at the time, of wanting to do anything to V. Meanwhile, under the PDL, cases against major politicians, including Adrian Năstase, were

processed. From that perspective, I'd say Băsescu withdrew from trying to influence justice. Although, from Y.'s side, some return of favor was probably expected. I know what emails and SMS messages I received from former colleagues… how we should vote for PDL, PD, the DA Alliance, to remove the greater evil from government. Later, attention shifted to PIN, Gușă's party, which later dissolved. I was bombarded with messages from dozens of yogis to vote for PIN in 2008. I don't know the exact arrangement, but apparently, having influence within your spiritual movement isn't enough—you have to ally with the right people, usually the second place. But PIN was in 15th place (laughs). Even Y., with tens of thousands of disciplined members, couldn't tip the balance.

Q: Okay, we've talked about politicians and parties. Is there another level, say, secret or semi-secret organizations that could also be enemies?

A: Yes, it's public knowledge: V. was, is, and will be a staunch anti-Mason. I don't know exactly why. Usually, it's useful to have a common enemy when leading large groups, to give them an objective to unite against… that's also a mass manipulation technique. I'm not saying V. manipulated the masses, but he was anti-Mason. There are writings, notes, and anti-Masonic conferences he gave; everything linked to conspiracy theories was promoted widely: Masons putting chips in our heads, in our bodies, etc. I don't know what happened after 2003-2004, but while I was there, he and the instructors clearly had an anti-Masonic stance.

Q: So the enemy is a politician or a group?

A: I think there are temporary allies and temporary enemies. Even in spiritual movements, once you reach a critical mass of 5,000–10,000 people you can influence, secret services—internal or external—start paying attention. Connections to political parties are made, you meet high-level politicians… unexpected collaborations arise. Regarding secretive organizations, they are no longer really secret. Masonry is discreet, not secret. I can't really speak about it—I'm not a Mason—but from Y.'s perspective, as a student, I participated in all their activities: courses, events… they were anti-Masonic. Why they were anti-Mason—before and after the Năstase/Băsescu/PIN phase—always the same: they said Masonry is satanic, demonic, evil, must be eradicated. They believed in

a New World Order controlled by Masons, unification of the US and EU under a single president, etc.

Q: So what were the values to defend?

A: The values were mainly freedom, democracy, individual expression and practice, fundamental rights—work, air, ecology, bio, clean and organic food. These are connected: promoting a healthy lifestyle excluding alcohol, coffee, rock music, vices… which bring huge revenue to the state through excises in a poor economy like Romania's. By promoting health, you conflict with the social-commercial status quo. Discussing eco, bio, GMOs, corporatocracy, meritocracy, anti-Masonry… you need someone to blame for all these problems. V. said, "because of Masonry, all these evils happen." So we promoting health, spirituality, and connection to the divine must be anti-Mason. That was a consistent stance.

Q: How was Y.'s internal organization?

A: Fairly centralized. V. appointed instructors, who ran courses in each city. Periodic meetings were held, maybe biweekly or monthly, directives were issued, camps organized—May 1 at Herculane, August at Costinești. There were no elections; instructors were qualified, experienced, passed tests. They were appointed rather than elected, and enjoyed financial and status benefits—free camps, events, networking, influence.

Q: Let's discuss key aspects of Y. in practice and folklore: camps, urine therapy, energy spirals… starting with camps.

A: May 1 camp at Herculane included meditation programs, nightly lectures where V. arrived late, read a few pages, answered questions—simple but fine for raising the masses' spiritual level. Spirals were done on a small hill, twice, with participants in zodiac order: man-woman, Aries-

Pisces, forming spirals around V. in the center. They believed it gathered extraordinary energy, mimicking basic forms of the universe: galaxies, atoms, electron orbits. Spiral Yang, direction mattered. Honestly, I believe effects were mostly subjective, not objectively reproducible. Mass gatherings influence mood and hormones, e.g., testosterone at stadiums or concerts. Some felt extraordinary states, others nothing; some endured cold.

Q: You mentioned zodiac signs—was there a coherent system in V.'s thinking?

A: Let's go to courses. Weekly, two-hour sessions: warm-up, asanas, breathing exercises, meditation, relaxation, new lesson. Materials: 4–7-page printed handouts. Hatha-Yoga, breathing, meditation, mantras, yantras, etc. Somewhat structured but not academically rigorous.

Q: Was it eclectic intuition-based or well-explained?

A: They had good theoretical explanations. Covered energetic bodies, chakras, nadis, kundalini, petal chakras, mantras, yantras, breathing, sexual energy—especially sexual continence.

Q: Did you elaborate on sexual practices?

A: Sexuality promoted open relationships, no possessiveness or jealousy—"everyone with everyone." New Age sexual practices. During intimacy, men avoided ejaculation, women avoided explosive orgasm, to transmute sexual energy into spiritual energy. Love had to be present. Positive aspect: sexual continence, alongside lacto-ovo-vegetarianism and asanas, were top three benefits of Y. for society. Premature ejaculation is a widespread male problem; addressing it improves sexual satisfaction, mental health, and relational fulfillment.

Or, what does sexual continence do? It teaches both men and women to time and control their sexual release, so that eventually they can extend the sexual act as long as possible. There were fairly simple exercises, and now with the internet you can find anything. There were mainly Kegel

exercises, certain sequences of sexual positions, recommended asanas before and after. Certain natural… naturalistic, sorry, aphrodisiacs were recommended. Everything related to Ayurveda—if you read the principles of Ayurveda and the aphrodisiacs it recommends—was also advised in Y.

Q: For example?

A: I don't remember (laughs), I didn't take many of these anyway, because at that age, aphrodisiacs weren't really necessary.

Q: What about contraindications, diets, or…

A: First of all, ejaculation was contraindicated—it was actually… this was even used as a form of leverage over men. There were girls who… you know, in the secular world, the shame was not having an erection; in the yogic world, the shame was being unable to control ejaculation. There was even a higher level of shame, so to speak (laughs). Another aspect that I think was not recommended was the use of… not explicitly stated, but basically, sexual continence was not a contraceptive method, though it was implicitly promoted as such. From that perspective, it wasn't positioned very well. And of course, despite the emphasis on continence, there were, from what I know from friends, quite a few sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Because sex was done without condoms, partners changed quite often, and parallel relationships were common. Empirically, regarding STDs, the situation was… grey, let's say. Even though before any retreat, analyses like VDRL were requested, there are many other diseases you cannot detect with basic tests, so many STDs circulated. This is, again, a negative side effect of sexual continence. I don't know what else to say about contraindications… there weren't really any…

Q: Regarding diet?

A: Ah, diet was standard: no meat, no animal products—milk and eggs were okay, as were vegetables, but no meat. Beyond that, there were no contraindications or special indications

regarding sex. Although I think there's a bit of a conflict here, because it's known that a little meat and wine before sex works wonders. But ascetics, when they go into caves and eat only vegetarian, or as close as possible, do so precisely to curb sexual urges. So you can't, on one hand, tell them "be lacto-vegetarian," and on the other, "have as much sex as possible," even if it's with continence.

Q**:** Biologically, how was a sexual act possible if protein intake wasn't complete?

A**:** It was possible because most of Y.'s audience at the time was quite young, so it didn't matter if they didn't eat meat. Think that in the '90s, V. was under 50—he was 40-something. I was 16. So the average age was around 20-25. At 20-25, you don't really feel the lack of meat, but at 35-40, you start to, and even more at 55-60. Today, Y.'s audience is older, 20-25 years older than back in '90. In my view, the effects of lacto-ovo vegetarianism and overuse of sexuality—even with continence—are now visible. Whether you ejaculate or not, if you have sex too often, it's still abuse. Some people who never practiced Yoga look much better physically than some practitioners.

Q**:** How do former members of Y. live now in society? How were they helped in their development?

A**:** Most focused on their professional lives. Being intelligent, receptive, empathetic, and with people skills, they applied all that they learned—empathy, telepathy, energetics, etc.—and advanced professionally more than others. Yoga helped them in that sense. But many left Y., especially after scandals. They felt the organization was too sectarian and controlling after V. was expelled and got political asylum in S. From my acquaintances—several dozen, maybe nearly a hundred—the perception was that "Y. degenerated over time. It started beautifully, but at a certain point, we wanted out." That's also my personal experience, only earlier: I left around 2002-2003; the big wave of departures was 2005-2008.

Q**:** Can we talk about successful people in business? Is it diverse or elitist?

A**:** There's stratification in Y., just like society. There are entrepreneurs, careerists, corporate employees, public officials, and professionally unsuccessful people. All social strata are represented, financially and professionally.

Q**:** Another issue was allegations about V.'s properties. How does a spiritual movement end up with property?

A**:** Almost entirely inaccurate. The ashrams, as far as I know, were registered in multiple people's names, including instructors, and originated from donations. Before 2002-2003, properties were cheap—you could buy a house in Ferentari for $5,000. With contributions from tens of thousands of students, it was easy to buy a house. Some instructors even donated their homes to become ashrams. This is not illegal. V. himself had modest possessions—he drove an SUV given as a donation, repaired it himself, dressed decently, bought books, and gave gifts—but the idea that he owned 400 properties is exaggerated. Donations became properties, often through volunteer work (Karma Yoga).

Q**:** What about now?

A**:** Ashrams continue to function; yogis live in them. "Living" is the word used, not "staying."

Q**:** So realistically, what can V. be accused of?

A**:** I think he made PR mistakes, handled the media poorly, was confrontational with authorities, and allowed elements of personality cult to form around him, though he himself was not fame-hungry. Also, he erred legally by involving J. (country), which became a financial engine post-2002, involving girls in activities that weren't spiritually aligned—possibly even dancing in clubs, but I doubt it involved prostitution. This was karmic error: a spiritual leader cannot manipulate others for profit or influence without consequences.

6. To China: Qigong

[18.02.2014]

Q**:** You moved from India to China, from Yoga to Qigong, internal alchemy. How did that transition happen?

A: First, I didn't really "transition"—there was a one-year break. I was saturated with spiritual literature, routines, diets, and lifestyle rules. I needed a break. At that Yoga course, it was obvious I had nothing more to gain. I informed V., "I'm done here" (laughs). He didn't react in a very honorable way, for him, and I thought I'd take a break, because I also wanted to figure out what I really wanted to do, where I wanted to go. I remember that during that time I also had a lot of work, several projects, so professionally I advanced a lot that year, and I made quite a bit of money, so I said to myself it was a good moment to step back…

Q: But why did he react like that?

A: Well, I felt he was very possessive, in a way… it was like an attitude of "I own you guys," and he was extremely jealous. Basically, anything or anyone outside of Y. or Yoga wasn't acceptable, it was belittled. According to him, we didn't really know how to make the right choices, and he alone supposedly held the greatest secrets of the Universe and the ultimate, absolute truth. Something I only realized in that particular conversation, because up until then he hadn't shown it at all—at least not openly, not in his talks or materials.

Q: Was the break emotionally difficult?

A: No, I had already taken what I needed and filtered out what I didn't want. From year 6-8, courses were more about conspiracy theories and anti-system topics than Yoga. A lot of conspiracy theories were being discussed, lots of anti-system topics, but I no longer felt that any actual Yoga

was being practiced there.

Q: What was it that you really wanted…?

A: Well, I thought… plus there was another issue: all those scandals in the newspapers, all those problems, which for me felt like… on one hand, it was a media lynching, but on the other, there was also something ostentatious going on. I mean, Y. himself was ostentatious…

Q: So he wasn't just a victim of the system…

A: He *was* a victim, but a very undiplomatic one, so to speak.

Q: And also a victim who, in a way, overstepped something at the public level.

A: Right—he was abused, but he also brought it upon himself, to put it bluntly. That's the idea. When he could have shown a bit more diplomacy, he missed the chance to demonstrate wisdom. That's how he ended up in the situation he's in.

Q: In other words, his PR was weak?

A: His PR was bad, his diplomacy was bad, his way of talking and communicating with the media was poor, and even his internal PR was bad—which, in fact, is much more important than external PR. So overall, other things had become more important to him. Whereas what I wanted was an authentic spiritual practice, with exercises that would actually produce measurable results, in one way or another, internal or external—but results that could be observed and verified. And I wasn't finding that there anymore. Plus, I wanted to try something else, because, you know how it is: when you only get your information from a single source, you start to get tunnel vision. So I thought—it's reasonable to try something else, it's reasonable to take a break, it's reasonable to compare what I had learned over those seven, eight, nine years with other systems, with

something different. So I started going to those courses… after a seven- or eight-month break, I began attending some Qigong classes that were being offered in Bucharest.

Q**:** Who practiced Qigong?

A: Well, there was the K. group, with M. and D., and I'd also heard about a course by a certain Sun Yun, but I never got around to attending it. Then there was Zhu Rongfu, who was teaching Taiji at "Gheorghe Lazăr" (highscool) and all sorts of other things. There were also some people from Brașov, but I never got to them—I don't even remember how… And of course, there was Z., whose book I had read, but who had disappeared from the radar—I think that was the period when he had moved to Baia Mare.

Q: Which book?

A: I think it was called *Medical Qigong*. Practically the only complete book on Qigong that I had read, and at the time it seemed extraordinary to me. About six months ago, I leafed through it again, and after my trip to China, it doesn't feel quite as extraordinary anymore.

Q: But still, it was a starting point—it sparked your interest?

A: Yes, it was a different system. I was drawn to the part about meridians and Qi, as opposed to chakras, nadis, and prana. The system seemed much better structured because it wasn't just about the meridian and the energy path; it included points along the meridian, correlations with anatomy, so it wasn't just a matter of organ-color-emotion correspondences. There were clear points along clear pathways. Acupuncture and everything related to these meridians and pathways is recognized by the World Health Organization, alongside homeopathy, and I found it intriguing—I wanted to see what this Qi was all about. The surprise, though, was that the disappointment was even bigger after attending these Qigong courses… these people were even more sect-like (laughs), so to speak.

Q: What do you mean by “sect-like”?

A**:** They lacked discernment; if you had even a slightly different opinion, it wasn’t well-received.

Q**:** Am I exaggerating if I say it’s brainwashing?

A**:** They… it wasn’t exactly brainwashing, it was manipulation.

Q**:** For what interest?

A**:** Financial. Financial interest. Because a business like this—think about it—if back then, for example, I take an example: K… had a hundred students, paying around 20 dollars or euros per month—back then it was dollars. So this person made $2,000 a month by holding a class once a week. Which, in 2003–2004, was a significant sum. And even today, it’s a decent sum. Plus the retreats, which were additional money, plus the materials, CDs, more money, plus… you understand, all those things.

Q**:** Okay, but ultimately, what does such a person—a master, let’s say—offer?

A**:** Well, first of all, K., what was different about K., because I know him… I can’t speak about the others, because I never went to their courses, and after that disappointment, I went straight to China and said, “Enough with Romania, I’m going to China.” What was nice about K. was, first—he didn’t have pretensions of being a master, he was very down-to-earth, and he didn’t react when others praised him or said exaggerated positive things about him. So, in a way, he manipulated through omission, you could say.

Q**:** And what about Z.?

A**:** I didn’t know him personally, never took any of his courses, never interacted with him, but from

his websites, which I visited, you get the impression that if you want to teach Qigong to others without his certification, it's almost a criminal offense. He wanted ownership over everything, claiming to be the only certified Qigong foundation affiliated with the Ministry of Health. A complete… absurdity. You can't claim ownership over practices like Yoga, Qigong, breathing, meditation.

Q**:** You can't monopolize…

A**:** You can't, and it's not right, moral, or spiritual.

Q**:** So we're talking about a market?

A**:** Yes. After 2000, it was clear there was supply and demand, competition in the spiritual market. Money was obviously a prime concern, and it still is. Big movements with weekly classes and rooms, posing as traditional Qigong, Yoga, Reiki schools… if a movement has fixed weekly activity, I 99% don't want to be part of it. Because it's clearly a financial process, paying membership fees continuously, usually without the master attending. Even K. didn't come himself; he sent assistants.

Q**:** Assistants.

A**:** Yes, substitutes who held his place. He didn't waste time with beginners. The techniques had strange names (laughs). Plus, people, especially girls, kind of flattered him; same old dynamic. K. was also frustrated with his acolytes because he felt he taught higher-quality stuff but had less success than Y. He actually started at Y., bringing his students from there.

Q**:** So Y. was a nursery for practitioners and masters?

A: No, it's not quite right to put it that way. The fact that everyone in today's spiritual niche—those

who are active now—was at some point involved with Y., doesn't mean that Y. "raised" them. It just means that, at a certain point, Y. was the only organized spiritual movement. They had branches, halls across the country, in the provinces, you know? Whether they wanted to or not, everyone who had an interest passed through there, at a time when there was no literature, no… Nowadays, we have a show on B1TV on Sunday mornings with parapsychologists, and the media is saturated. Back then, you hunted for information; now, there's over-information. You have to be careful, to discern noise from signal. Today, the noise-to-signal ratio is heavily skewed toward noise. Back then, we had neither noise nor signal (laughs). So when you saw an announcement that said "Yoga" in big letters—and maybe a woman with large breasts on the poster—you'd go check it out to see what it was about. They knew how to attract attention… but that doesn't mean it was a training ground. No. It just means they were the only source of information at the time, the first and only right after '89, because they were very well organized. Remember, they already held the first public Yoga session in January '90.

Q: Let's look at it this way. Before 1989, there was only one political party. Inevitably, all people—including many capable individuals, but also those eager to advance their careers—went through the Communist Party. But from that, they also learned how such a system works and acquired certain skills. It's like a single-party system through which people passed and learned—would you say that?

A**:** Yes, anyone over 10–12 years old in 1989 with spiritual interest inevitably encountered Y. You couldn't bypass it. Everyone has discernment—they can filter influences, avoid sectarian tendencies or personality cults. K. didn't have those tendencies; V. did—clear sectarianism, personality cult, claiming mastery in subtle ways without ever having learned Yoga in India.

Q**:** What do you mean by "in subtle"?

A**:** Like an astral master, an entity. K. had that too.

Q**:** An entity in another dimension?

A**:** Yes. In the absence of a real, physical master (laughs).

Q**:** A way to justify authority?

A: It's a form of being an impostor. In short, that's what it is—a form of impostor behavior. This isn't just in Romania, either. After K.—by the way, K. got jealous and attacked us when we started going to another teacher, our little group that came from Y., about seven or eight of us. We said, "Alright, we've figured out K." And we did, pretty quickly, in six months, a year… so let's go see someone else. His name was D.

Well, even there, after about a year, we ended up with the same "master of subtlety," the same tired nonsense repeated three times, the same sect-like tendencies, the same girls who obviously want the alpha male. That's just how it is—obviously. At any rock concert, the woman in the audience wants the guy on stage, the lead singer, not the bassist or drummer. The lead singer.

So by then, we were already looking at the whole scene condescendingly, at this continuous déjà vu, but we still decided to go see how these "masters" operated in their own homes.

Q: Okay, up to that point—if the women are drawn to the alpha male, what did the men want?

A: …Ah, and he wasn't Romanian, he was Italian—D.—so just to be clear, it's not only Romanians who do this. Everyone does it. As for the men, things were very simple. At Yoga, at Y., these open relationships were promoted—everyone with everyone, without possessiveness or jealousy. Which, by the way, turned out to be a breeding ground for… a whole battery of sexually transmitted diseases. All the people who passed through there and got involved in these open relationships—you can see today what happened. There are people who died of genital cancer, people who had major problems with STDs: AIDS, HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea, trichomonas, chlamydia, mycoplasma… you name it. In the years at Y., I kept hearing the names of these diseases whispered around. After hearing two or three of these disease names among close

friends, you just don't want anything to do with anyone in that circle anymore. Because… HPV—I won't even start—there were so many people with HPV. And especially in men, HPV manifests in a certain way; it's a traumatizing experience. So what do you do as a man to protect yourself ? You step aside, keep your distance, and focus on your own business. But that doesn't stop you from noticing what's going on.

Q: Okay, but aside from sex, how did the other men relate to this alpha male? How far did it go, and for how long?

A: From my point of view, I went strictly for information and practice. I wasn't interested at all in what the master, leader, or trainer was doing with the female students—it didn't concern me, and it didn't affect me if something happened—but I did observe, and drew my own conclusions. I looked first at how the women created that giggling, inappropriate for the context, atmosphere—you go there to learn something, not to giggle. That's one thing. And secondly… well, if the information was good and the practice was solid, what happened afterwards—like going out to eat after a training session—was irrelevant. We didn't care.

Inevitably, in a group like that, spending two hours of continuous sitting, practicing, and following discipline, a sense of fraternity and belonging naturally forms. So, naturally, everyone interacts with everyone there. Just the simple act of going into a hall, getting dressed and undressed together, seeing everyone interact, and sharing fairly intimate personal details creates a sense of belonging. So, naturally, there was some interaction between everyone. The problem was if it caused other… annoyances, let's say. There weren't pleasures—it was clearly unpleasant, in my view, it ruined the atmosphere. But that's a side note.

Obviously, there were men, friends, who came with their girlfriends, and their girlfriends started looking at the trainer with puppy eyes (laughs). Naturally, the men would react—they were jealous. There's no question about that. Certain men were definitely jealous.

Q: Yes, I'm not just talking about reactions, but also what they wanted in return. What did they hope to gain from the alpha male?

A: Around this alpha male—the trainer, master, guru, or shifu—there were two or three favorites who would obviously get something, if not small scraps, maybe some larger advantages. So, there were perks if you stayed close to the alpha male. For example, all the Yoga instructors… there are well-known stories about how Y. instructors would choose which city to teach in based on which women were attending. This is common knowledge. If you go to an ex-Y. forum, you'll see it comes up over and over. These things are part of their subculture.

With others—like K. and D., where I had my experiences—these things were less pronounced, but not nonexistent, just to be clear. And, of course, there was the financial aspect. That was really frustrating, because at some point you realized that financial interest came before training, and compromises were made. For example: "Alright, we'll accept a few beginners in the advanced training series—if there are eight advanced students and we add four beginners, the revenue increases by 50%, so let's take the beginners too." The problem was that the rest of us had to wait for these new people to catch up during the first two or three days of the course. That wasn't ideal, because everyone took time off, invested money, stepped away from family or partners to attend an intensive retreat, and then there were novices starting from zero.

The issue wasn't the new people themselves—it's good that new people join. The problem was that there weren't two separate series: one for beginners, starting from zero, and one for intermediates/advanced. These two issues—the sexual aspect and the financial aspect—polluted the whole experience and caused deep disappointment among practitioners, as a community. We are, after all, a community: tens of thousands of people interested in Yoga, Qigong, Reiki, energy work, subtle practices, meditation, working with mind and spirit. If there is a general sense of disappointment, I think it's justified. It's not just a few people feeling this way—it's thousands, tens of thousands. When sexual and financial concerns take precedence over the original purpose of the movement, it becomes sect-like. The movement is already on a downward slope.

Q: What did you do when you were disappointed by all this? What happened next?

A**:** I went to Asia. First with D., an Italian anthropologist. We met various masters—one in Bangkok, one in Java, and Master Jiang in the Yellow Mountains. Wang Liping I reached through a teacher affiliated with the Chinese Academy, not through D.

Q: Can you talk about the foreign masters?

A: Chronologically: In August 2004, a month-long course with Master Luo in Bangkok. D. introduced us; Luo did Fa Qi on us. Rudimentary and inefficient training, painful, slow, effortful, but eye-opening. Luo was a Daoist-Buddhist fusion. Financial interests were clear—$2,000 course, D. as intermediary.

Q: The 700-euro courses?

A: With D. in Bali: two techniques—external (for bones, tendons, connective tissue) and internal meditative breathing technique, received from the "subtle master" and Professor Wang. Early meetings with D. happened in Romania too, arranged by a woman, U., who had disputes over Mantak Chia's reselling rights.

A disciple of Mantak Chia, this D., an Italian anthropologist, was invited by U. to hold various workshops here. K. used to go to him secretly and wouldn't tell us (laughs). We eventually found out, so we also went. K. got jealous, and for a while, those of us who went to D. stuck together to learn from him. We figured that if K. was going, then there must be something worthwhile there.

Q: So basically, those of you who wanted more went somehow "upstream"?

A: As close to the source as possible, that's the right word...

Q: So you went from K. to D., then through D. to Luo...

A: Yes, through D. to Luo, but also to Professor Wang, Master Jiang, and the Magus of Java. And from Professor Wang, we went further upstream to Master Liping.

Q: What can you say about the Magus of Java?

A**:** Well, with the Magus of Java it was a very short visit, after one of those seminars in Bali. Basically, D. kept calling him every afternoon: “We’re in Bali, we’re in Bali, can we come see you?” Finally, one Friday, he said, “Fine, come.” It turned out to be just a 15-minute visit. He gave all of us Fa Qi, then demonstrated a kind of acupuncture using Fa Qi through the needles. You can find plenty of videos of him doing this on YouTube. It’s acupuncture, but instead of just inserting the needle, he channels Qi through it—into points that aren’t even listed in acupuncture manuals.

Q**:** Do such points really exist?

A**:** Yes. When I asked him, “Why not make a chart of these points you use?” he replied, “No, these points must remain in my mind, because my Qi and my Fa Qi are compatible with them. Another master, with a different Qi, would use different points.” So as a healer, he had his own personal map of points. That made me realize that uniqueness doesn’t come only from the patient and their condition, but also from the therapist’s own energy configuration—from the relationship between patient and therapist.

It was quite a scene, almost theatrical. Besides giving us Fa Qi through the palm, at one point he suddenly dropped his pants, leaving only those famous pink sumo-style briefs, and had each of us place a hand on his lower abdomen, just below the navel. He then projected Fa Qi from that area. That was the first time I ever saw Fa Qi emitted without using the hands.

Q**:** More precisely, from what point was he projecting?

A**:** From the dantian...

Q**:** So through the dantian, emitted from the abdomen... Did it feel like electrical energy?

A**:** Exactly, like an electric current. What was fascinating was that he could adjust the intensity, like turning a dial. It wasn’t just an on/off switch, like with Luo. He would raise or lower the current and ask, “Do you feel it, do you feel it?” If you didn’t, he would let the current travel down your wrist,

then your elbow, and so on.

But our meeting with the Magus of Java lasted under 30 minutes. At the end, he didn't even want to take a group photo with us. That made me think that D. wasn't as close or accepted by him as he liked to boast.

Q**:** Alright, leaving "politics" aside, what did meeting Luo and the Magus of Java mean to you?

A**:** With Luo, it meant a lot, because it was my first objective proof of Qi's existence. The Magus of Java confirmed it again and showed me that Qi isn't only emitted through fingers and palms—it can flow through the whole body. I was also struck by his physical appearance. He was very youthful, almost radiant—greenish, even. Though he was around 70, he didn't look older than 50 at most.

Q**:** And what was his practice?

A**:** A form of *Neidan*, which he called *Neigong*.

Q**:** So, a kind of eclectic Daoist internal alchemy...

A**:** More precisely, *Mo Pai*. His path was called Mo Pai, a Daoist branch. At one point, if it had spread more successfully, it might have rivaled Longmen Pai, or even Buddhism.

Q**:** Why didn't it?

A**:** I think because the Magus of Java—and that whole lineage, since "pai" means branch—moved to Indonesia, where there's a large Chinese minority. They lived in relative isolation there. Without a big "fish tank" of practitioners to transmit and diffuse the knowledge, it stayed confined mostly to the Chinese minority. And in Indonesia, with its very particular form of Hinduism mixed with

pantheistic and Buddhist elements, it was very hard for other traditions to gain ground, especially as a minority.

Q**:** So Mo Pai remained limited, with competition from other traditions...

A**:** Yes. Interestingly, about three or four years after meeting the Magus of Java, and a year after meeting Master Jiang, I learned that Mo Pai originated from about the same province as Master Jiang's branch, near the Yellow Mountains. So it seems both lineages sprang from roughly the same place. That's quite intriguing, even if not confirmed for sure.

Q**:** And who is Master Jiang?

A**:** I met Master Jiang in Thailand, again through D. There was a public conference organized alongside one of D.'s workshops. Master Jiang immediately started speaking directly to me, praising me and inviting me to China. And again, déjà vu: D. became jealous and possessive, just like K. had been earlier.

Q**:** Jealous of what? The attention Master Jiang gave you? Why did he single you out?

A**:** I don't know. You'd have to ask him. But from our group of about 20, the other 19 were all asked about their illnesses or imbalances. I was left for last, and his very first question was: "How long have you been practicing?" And unlike the others, he told me I was perfectly balanced, with no problems at all. That stunned me, because at the time I didn't have such a high opinion of myself. At first, I even thought it was some kind of trick.

Q**:** So he could diagnose without touching?

A**:** Yes. He even demonstrated.

Q: What kind of demonstration?

A: Well, he called it “X-rays.” It wasn’t literal, of course, but like a replacement for X-ray scans. Someone would draw a number on a sheet of paper placed on another person’s back, and standing in front of that person, Jiang could “see through” and read the number. He said it was the same ability he used to see organ auras and diagnose conditions without physical contact.

Q: So he considered you one of the most energetically balanced, and he invited you to China.

A: Yes. He told me I was ready, that I had to “cross the bridge,” and that no matter how much I continued practicing without a true, authentic master from a genuine lineage, I would remain stuck. He told me exactly what I had been searching for over the past 12 years—since my very first yoga course.

Q: So that marked the end of one cycle of seeking...

A: Exactly. I thought, “Okay (snaps fingers), this is it. I want to continue.”

Q: And how do such things happen—why does destiny bring the seeker and the master together?

A: Actually, I don’t think destiny brings them. You search and search, and when the right conditions arise, you’re ready to find.

Q: And then the master recognizes you?

A: Yes, and he gives you signals—like, “I want you in my school.” It’s almost like a recruitment

process.

Q: What happened afterward?

A: Well, I had brought along a Romanian patient of mine, who had very serious health issues. He needed a follow-up in China. So I decided not to return to Romania from Thailand, but to go with him directly to China.

Q: And you did arrive in China?

A: Yes, with my Romanian colleague, his wife, and Master Jiang with his staff. When we arrived, Jiang immediately began "recruiting" me: "Join our school, I'll show you my formulas, I'll teach you Fa Qi..." But I insisted we focus on my colleague first, since he was the one in real need. Still, Jiang kept trying to bring me in. I was only 26 at the time—it was January 2007, our second meeting with him, in Guangzhou.

Q: We'll need a separate chapter just about Jiang...

A: Sure, but let me also tell you about Liping, because that's very interesting.

Q: Yes, the fourth master—Liping.

A: Right. I first met him through another colleague, S.. He somehow arranged it through Professor Wang—don't ask me how. In September 2008, eight of us Romanians ended up in the same room with Liping, sitting on mats, meditating. At the time, I hadn't even read *Opening the Dragon Gate*. I had no idea who Liping really was—the patriarch of Longmen Pai. I was just going along because the others were going.

Q: So you didn't know at first who he was?

A**:** Not at all. It was me and my wife—we spent about 10,000 euros in total, between flights, lodging, translation, everything. Serious time and money invested. Liping praised both me and my wife, which made S., the Romanian organizer, jealous. Eventually, he even pushed us out of the group. Later, by chance, while waiting outside Jiang's hotel room in Guangzhou, I met an American who also trained with Liping. He had a slot booked with Liping but no group. I told him, "I've got a group—we'll make it work." That's how our Romanian group rejoined Liping, through this American.

Q**:** So you see this as destiny, or the hand of the universe?

A**:** I see it as karmic chains of cause and effect. When the chain unfolds, all the links connect and events fall into place—even if others try to oppose it. The message, for me, was clear: never be sectarian, keep an open mind. Be loyal to your master, but don't refuse your "uncles." In China, this is respected—diversity of sources and knowledge. I hadn't seen that kind of openness before, in Romania or even in Europe.

Q**:** So loyalty to the master, but without fanaticism.

A**:** Exactly. Spiritual practice should bring you freedom, not restriction. If you become more constrained than before, then what's the point?

Q**:** And eventually Liping came to Romania too?

A**:** Yes, later on. Liping is playful, jovial, very down-to-earth. With him, it's strictly a teacher-student relationship—not master-disciple. You come, you learn, you pay a clear fee, you practice, and then you leave and incorporate the practice at home.

Q**:** And what does Master Wang Liping teach?

A**:** *Neidan*—Daoist internal alchemy. But very methodically, almost yoga-style, step by step, with clear stages. He explains the theory, even draws diagrams on the board, then guides the practice carefully. It's structured, detailed, and authentic Daoist internal alchemy, from the Longmen Pai lineage. He is the 18th generation, the current patriarch—basically the "father figure" of Daoism in China.

7. Internal Alchemy (I)

[12.08.2014]

Q: What does one engage in when practicing meditation or internal alchemy, Yoga? You recently attended a retreat that also included a black fast. What kind of experience did you have?

A: Let's take them one by one, because they are totally different experiences. The approach in Yoga, as a Yoga practitioner, is one way; in meditation, it's another; and in these retreats, these withdrawals with a black fast, it's yet another. So, how shall we take them? Which one?

Q: First, in Yoga, what kind of experience is it, as lived by you, and what is the goal, plus the effects, besides the pursued goals, the concrete effects?

A: At this Yoga course I attended, at Y. [the Yoga school], the main thing I took from there was the theory. So, you get some basic, esoteric notions, like this esoteric anthropology of the human body, as I call it. The subtle bodies, the sheaths, prana, the nadis, the chakras, all of it. So, practically, it leads your mind... it's somehow the first time you consider that besides this body made of flesh and its anthropology and anatomy, there is another body, without substance, but which has its form, its functions, its memory, its intelligence, and so on. That's one thing, but what I haven't mentioned was the part of familiarization with the posture and meditative attitude. Of meditation, or meditative. In what sense? For the first time, you are made to sit with your legs

crossed, seated, eyes closed, for a period exceeding 15-20 seconds, a minute, and you get to 10

minutes, you get to 15 minutes, half an hour, 45 minutes, an hour, after which the bodily contours, the breathing, and so on begin to dissolve, and you start to go a little beyond these things. After that, you start to practice while meditating. That is, there is this thing with mantras, with yantras. With mantras, you utter a syllable, then you wait... an initiatory, secret syllable, into which you are in turn initiated. And you wait for a sound, and after you attune that syllable with the sound... so, how to put it, slowly, slowly... with yantras, it's with those drawings, like some geometric figures, which represent something...

Q: What?

A: Either certain – they called them – powers or cosmic wisdoms, something like that, or force centers. That is, there were several ways to resonate with one aspect or another of subtle reality. Through sound, and visually, respectively. Then there was the kinetic, in the sense that you moved, you entered an asana and the asana activated a chakra. Then there was this other part, with colors, so there were several ways through which some pathways in the brain were somehow recreated. Now, how well or poorly they were taught there, we won't discuss. The idea is that practice familiarized me with the meditation posture. Because when I arrived at Liping's, at the first seminar in 2007, which was also written about in the academic journal... that article... we, the eight Romanians who got there, were already sitting quite well in meditation. Liping, when he saw how we sit in meditation, was super-delighted.

Q: Why was he delighted?

A: Well, probably his lay students – because he teaches both monks and laypeople, he teaches both Taoists and Buddhists, he doesn't discriminate – probably didn't sit very well in meditation. And we sat quite well for some beginners.

Q: How come you sat so well?

A: Well, we had all been ex-Y., let's say. After ten years of Yoga, no matter how poorly or well that

Yoga was taught, no matter how poorly or well you practice, you sit on your butt with your legs crossed for an hour, meaning you don't move. What happens inside now, whether you are doing well or not what you're doing during... physically, the form, the external bodily posture was perfect, from his point of view, for some laypeople. If you take a person off the street, put them to sit with legs crossed, on a chair, let's say, or on something soft, not necessarily directly on the floor, they won't sit for more than two minutes. And even if they do, the mind starts, and even if the mind stops, then the emotions start, because there are several stages through which... that cause a shut-down. So, for him, this was a ground he could work with, a very good ground he could work with. And I saw him, literally, happy that he had met people like that, people off the street, as it were, laypeople, who have families, so they aren't some ascetic or something, me or... nor were my colleagues. And yet we sat for an hour with our legs crossed. And slowly, slowly, in eight days he brought us to about two hours, two hours and something, with an extremely powerful practice. He called it at that time... he said it was nuclear Yoga, for our body. That is, just as you have, for example, nuclear power plants for producing electricity, which produce the most energy, exactly the procedure taught by him, that's exactly what it was. It was the so-called "nuclear power plant."

Q: Is it about efficiency, about resources, the more subtle work with resources?

A: There are several things, it's very complex to answer this question, but, in summary, there are three factors that contributed to this. Him, as a master, because he had Qi, which I had never encountered at that level in anyone else. So, without putting his hand on you, without touching you...

Q: How does the Qi feel? How do you recognize the Qi? The power...

A: Well, I don't know how to give general directions, but I'll say how it happened for me and my wife. By the second day for my wife and the third morning for me, some spontaneous internal movements began, inside the body, in the lower abdomen. Without me or my wife... for my wife it was more in the hands, but it also started from the lower abdomen, during the sitting, and for me

it was during another practice where the body was in a posture lying on the bed... and then they started for me and began from the lower abdomen and extended towards the legs and hands. These movements do not happen if you don't have your meridians balanced, the yin-yang meridians balanced, cleansed, and you don't have enough Qi in the *dantian*... such a thing doesn't happen. And when it does happen, literally, they are not movements from muscles or bones, they are movements from that charged accumulator, so to speak.

Q: What accumulator?

A: Well, in this lower dantian there is an energetic vortex, let's call it that, which is called the *dantian*, the *xia dantian* (lower *dantian*).

Q: Where is it located?

A: Two *cun* below the navel, 3/10 inward, so, somehow, in the lower abdomen. So if you draw a line like this... two *cun* means two thumb widths, below the navel, you draw a horizontal line from the front towards the back, you divide it into ten, you go three segments inward, also from the front, three tenths, and there would be the center of this *xia tian*, but it's not just a point, it's not an area, it's not a volume, it's a functional area, it's a function that you activate there. So it's not an anatomical organ.

Q: So, the dimensions we operate with don't satisfy the description.

A: No, no... and it has its own breathing, its own memory, its own life. So, you can't... there are some ways, for example Mo Pai, of the Magus from Java, whom I visited, and we talked about, where they literally take you for an X-ray, they X-ray you and a black ball is seen on the X-ray, there. And after you die, they perform an autopsy, they take that ball and put it in... it's a precious thing, which remains after the practitioner. That material, physical reflection, but the *dantian* is not

reduced only to that ball.

Q: So, it's a function and in matter.

A: It's a function. Because if that function is not well regulated, trained, and so on, you get into other troubles, meaning, you can actually degrade your state of health. And everyone should know this, that what practitioners do is dangerous.

Q: We had started by discussing what the black fast is like and what are...

A: Good, and I continued with Liping, retreats, retreats, retreats... at one point, in 2012, I was invited to a so-called fasting retreat, "*bi gu* retreat". I thought about it, changed my mind, and in the end I didn't go. It was five days of fasting, in a 12-day retreat. I didn't go, but I thought, I also received a document about this fasting, quite well described, what this fasting is about, why and how, and so on. Well, in 2014, the follow-up to that retreat was held, the continuation of that retreat, and I attended. A 20-day retreat, of which ten days – tentatively, ten days of black fast. That is, only water, no food, no fruit, nothing, only water. And I participated. At the time of this interview, I'm practically one month from that black fast. A month and a bit. I started on June 30th, the first day of black fast, a day of fruit before, on the 29th, and I held until July 9th. So, it would be ten days without... after which the exit is done with two days of congee, that rice in a lot of water, and the reintroduction in reverse order of the elimination, so to speak, of foods. Greens, then carbohydrates, then light meat like fish, chicken, and finally up to beef, pork, lamb, and so on. Those who are lacto-ovo vegetarians stop where they stop, and so on. Well, during these ten days, the conductive conditions of the body, and of the tissue, change a lot. Why? Well, because firstly, the body redistributes its resources... no: firstly, it destroys everything it no longer needs. Everything that means degraded tissue, sick cells in the blood, anything non-optimal is eliminated. I lost ten kilograms in ten days, so one kilogram per day, which is about 12 percent of my own body weight. Very, very much. The idea is to gradually enter this fast, that's why you have that fruit day, it was supposed to be three days, but I only did one day. Because I wanted to have more days of fast only with water. And the idea is to eliminate everything you have to eliminate from the

intestines; when the fruit day ends, you shouldn't have any, so you practically close the third Yin gate, the anus, so you have no business during these ten days. Practically, you only eliminate urine, which means... but this doesn't mean the first Yin gate is open. In fact, we lose a lot of energy through *huiyin*, that is, through the perineum, not through the other two. This is a precondition, which you obtain with the black fast. The three Yin gates begin to close, and...

Q: What are the three Yin gates?

A: Well, the sexual orifice, the perineum, and the anal orifice. They are also very important acupuncture points. Well, the idea is that...

Q: *Huiyin* being located...

A: ...between the anus and the sex. That is the perineum, between the anus and the sex. And this *huiyin* is the main culprit for energy leaks, because that is its function, elimination. In fact, it subordinates the other two Yin gates and regulates them. Well, by doing the black fast, you practically seal this part. Also by doing the black fast, you begin to seal a bit the upper gates too, these sensory organs, eyes, mouth, nose, ears, and so on, and the intestines empty slowly, and the internal organs enter a regime of resource redistribution. So, after the organism kills everything that is to be killed, as being non-optimal, it reallocates the remaining resources and the surpluses, so that the whole body maintains its functions and characteristics. The environment in which you keep this black fast is also very important. Because if you keep a black fast in a tropical area, like in Singapore – and humid, practically – the effort of thermoregulation is not that great, and the effort of hydration, likewise, is not that great. If you are on the shore, on the island, the humidity in the air is a bit higher. And the skin, in turn, hydrates the body. So, Singapore we could say is a much better place in summer. It is much better than keeping a black fast here in winter. Like our Christmas fast, in winter. Impossible in winter, here, at minus 30 degrees, to do, in full safety conditions, ten days of black fast. And to go out, to have activity, because during these days of black fast, we weren't closed in a room, lying on a bed. No, there were physical practices, breathing practices, meditation, it was an eight-hour routine of practice. So it didn't mean that if

we are fasting, that's it, we are exempt from practice. No. And my experience with this whole black fast thing, besides this effect of detoxification, weight-loss, as they say... and about weight-loss I would add one thing, a small parenthesis: after I came out of the fast, although I gained 40-50 percent of what I lost, however, the fat-muscle-water distribution remained that of the end of the fast. That is, I practically decreased the percentage of fat in the body, maintaining the percentage of muscles in the body, and when I gained weight, that 40 percent, those 4-5 kilos, the percentage, the distribution of fat in the muscles remained that of the end of the fast. So, when I put it back on, I didn't put fat back on. Why? Because that fat was used as surplus during those ten days, it re-entered the metabolism and was burned, practically.

Q: But in broad lines, I understand...

A: Good. That's the weight-loss effect, which doesn't... Well, besides all this, the practice, the qualitative level of the practice is like a leap, you are in a leap, a sprint, I don't even know what to call it. Because the mind is much more stable, the body is empty, literally, you have the feeling of emptiness inside, of space, ready to absorb something, to metabolize something, from an energetic point of view. You feel all the pulses differently. And I'm not just referring to the heart's pulse here. Each organ has its pulse, its noise, its smell, its texture. They are felt very well, and working with these lines from internal alchemy, especially the *Tianmu xue* line, which I will talk about, but after I finish this idea. So, this line, working with Tianmu xue is greatly facilitated. People who had never seen in their life, had never had any luminous or light phenomenon on this route, after the black fast, or during the black fast, had them. So, the conductive conditions of the body change so as to facilitate these phenomena. The *Tianmu xue* line is also a line, horizontal...

Q: Explain, better, this line in the context of internal alchemy practice. What is internal alchemy?

A: Yes, but I'm not going to teach internal alchemy now. I can only say this, that in all traditions there is this concept of the third eye, of the area in front of the forehead... the superior area of the head, so to speak, above the eyebrows, is very important. All traditions. It doesn't matter, wherever you look, this area and especially the area between the eyes, above, on the forehead, is

very important. Well, Tianmu xue is nothing other than this route that any tradition, not just Taoists or Christians or... everyone wants to access it...

Q: But aren't we generalizing too much? Especially since there is a lot of talk now about meditation, the pineal gland, the third eye, it's talked about everywhere, in fact, a lot on the internet, because now people get a lot of information from there...

A: Yes, but the law of conservation of quality information remains, meaning, access to information, thanks to the internet, is not easier, because both good information and noise, bad information, increase.

Q: My question is the following: is it good to superimpose, to create correspondences between different disciplines? To say that this is the notion of the third eye from Yoga, from internal alchemy, from I don't know what else?

A: Yes, because the human body is the same. If it were as you say, it would mean that religion modifies the anthropology of the human body, which is not the case. Yes, climate affects our practices. The relief, the air, the quality, you know... That is, Tibetans, at 5000 meters, probably have other breathing techniques than the Indian on the seashore or the Christian in the Carpathians. I don't deny that. And religions adapt to these environmental factors, but, in the end, the body is the body. So, it has Qi, it has *shen*, it has a heart, emotions, affects. All these things exist, it doesn't depend... this thing is transcultural and trans-anthropological.

Q: Aren't there too many confusions and superimpositions... identities are created between notions that are not about physics or biology and then an equals sign is put between an energy center and such and such gland? Is that appropriate?

A: Well, no. The *Tianmu xue* line, first of all, is not equal to the pineal gland. The pineal gland is

the physical projection of this non-physical function, *Tianmu xue*. That is, it's like saying: "Hey, only the light bulb exists, but the electricity coming through the wire doesn't exist. Only the bulb and its luminosity exist. But the electricity and the switch and the power plant that feeds all this equipment don't exist." They exist and they are not equal. The bulb is not equal to the power plant, the power plant is not equal to the wire, but they are connected, they generate one another. This whole mechanism is interconnected. This is exactly where both medicine and religion, and from a social point of view, all three suffer. Why? Because there is no holistic approach. People don't consider them linked. The moment you consider them linked, interconnected, and you have a holistic approach and you realize that in a thumb the whole body is reflected, from the top of the head to the heels and vice versa, the whole body reflects the thumb, from all points of view, physical, functional, and so on, then the discussion changes a bit. Because you realize that this line, *Tianmu xue*, is the energetic route and the pineal gland is the physical projection of this energetic route. And studies can be done and have been done, that 20 minutes of meditation per day for a week changes the biomarkers for...

Q: What kind of meditation?

A: Even this, how to say, mindful meditation, so not necessarily internal alchemy. Meditation like this, you sit on your butt with your eyes closed and you calm down, so you don't have to do anything during that time. You sit for 20 minutes with your eyes closed, you calm your breathing, your heart...

Q: Are we talking about Yoga, are we talking about Zen?

A: Any kind of meditation. And the empty meditations, as I call them, empty meditation, meaning without practice. Even these do very well. Studies have been done, they've been done with two groups, control group and... in 99, 95, 99 percent of cases there were conclusive results, in favor of...

Q: What does that mean? We sit cross-legged...

A: So, mindful meditation, leaving internal alchemy aside... mindful meditation is a very simple thing, in appearance, seemingly simple, right? The meditation posture is on the butt, with legs crossed, not lotus, legs crossed, cross-legged, spine straight, the whole body relaxed, eyes closed. We are aware of what is happening in us and around us. That's mindful meditation. We are attentive to what is happening in us and around us. We do not empty the mind of thoughts, we do not bring thoughts, we do absolutely nothing from an intentional point of view, or of attention, except...

Q: Is it a form of contemplation?

A: No, contemplation is a bit higher than mindful. When you get to contemplation, there are other routes. And the word contemplation, con-temp-lation, with the temple, is a bit... No. Mindful meditation, or meditation of presence, meditation of awareness. You simply are attentive to what happens to you, at the moment you sit with your legs crossed. You expect nothing, you modify nothing, everything that comes is welcome. You observe, you memorize, time passes, you finish the practice, tomorrow you start again.

Q: In disciplines of which religions is this kind of meditation practiced?

A: Buddhists have it, and yogis, very much.

Q: And then, what is the zazen posture?

A: And zazen, yes. And zazen practice. The same thing. So you have no expectations, that is the key to this mindful meditation. You have no expectations. It's not like in internal alchemy, you sit down and you know you have a procedure, you have some things to do, you observe, you compare

the effects with what the master says should appear as effects. So, you have an outcome, a goal. That is no longer mindful meditation.

Q: Good, so, can we understand that the practice of internal alchemy makes us imagine a kind of internal kitchen, where we work. How do you explain all these practices?

A: It is an external, natural environment, in which... they said this: "Hey, there is a parallel between nature and the external universe and the internal universe, the internal landscape, the body."

Q: What do you do and for what purpose?

A: In Neidan (Internal Alchemy), the purpose is to regularize the activity of this internal landscape, of the internal environment, so that it functions according to the natural, organic, unaltered principles of the external landscape, of nature. You know they have this thing, with nature, all the time, to go with nature. This is a very concrete thing, not a metaphor, understand? They looked at nature, "Hey, what elements do we have in nature? Well, earth, water, metal, wood, fire. Ok, how do these elements interact? Who nourishes whom? Who destroys whom? How about the seasons? How about the cycles, the rhythms, what is the sequence, how long does it last, who follows whom?" All these, observed externally, were transposed and refined with internal practices, inside the body. And it took a very long time... thousands of years, until they were written down and then these practices were standardized. And then the effects were seen. Because it's one thing to try, another to have repeatable, duplicable effects. Well, and what the Taoists observed: hey, if we introduce these practice routines, at various periods of the day, year, month, week, the entire functionality of the body is optimized.

Q: More understandably, more concretely?

A: Better health, better functioning from a psycho-emotional point of view, more harmonious interactions with those around you, if there are small health problems, they are ameliorated or even disappear. Obviously, if there are chronic conditions, we go to the doctor. If there are problems related to intuition, they are also resolved, these senses beyond... I call them extrasensory senses, open up a bit. If you have unanswered questions, or all sorts of... look, for example, there are many people today who are depressive or have anxieties.

So, depression, in our society, is very widespread. Much more widespread than the statistics tell us. People develop anxieties and depressions, even within families, so having other people, other family members, around them, and many of them are undetectable, undetected and undetectable. But the inner state is an anxious state, for example, and/or a depressive one. Through this practice, the hormonal balance becomes optimal, the metabolism also becomes optimal and light, and slowly, slowly, these small problems disappear. They either improve or disappear. Things that, otherwise... so, what alternative would you have? To go to a doctor or a psychologist. There, you will be prescribed, you will be given a diagnosis, which you already know before you go anyway. I mean, you don't need a doctor to realize you're depressed, honestly, it's really not the case. Or anxious. Or that your belly hurts, or your intestines, or your stomach. You don't need a doctor for that, in my opinion, today, at the moment. We are intelligent enough. If a dog can figure out that its belly hurts, I think a human can too. So, and after that, what's the alternative? Well, that doctor prescribes you medication. If you're depressed, they put you on Xanax, or I don't know, I'm not up to date anymore. So they give you some medication and you basically become a vegetable, over time, with these medications. Or, you do something yourself. You start doing something yourself, to prevent or treat these things in time. From the moment they are in an incipient stage. There are people and people, preferences and preferences. There are people for whom swallowing a pill is much easier than doing who knows what. And so they swallow that pill. They trust the doctor and take pills and chemicals and it's ok. And I'm talking about people who don't have chronic conditions. They don't have chronic, or acute illnesses or... No. People who have a beginning of something. Quickly, everyone to the doctor. Pills, antibiotics, all sorts of medications like that, I'm not a pharmacist or a doctor, but the idea is that this practice optimizes physical, psychic, and emotional activity. And it optimizes in an integrated, holistic way.

Q: Let's return to the practice, to the "kitchen" of internal alchemy practice. What are the tools

and the material it works with? Meaning everything that happens within us.

A: We have to stop...

8. Internal Alchemy (II)

[12.08.2014]

Q: What are the tools and materials that internal alchemy works with?

A: Well, internal alchemy, that's exactly why it's called internal alchemy, because it works only with the practitioner's body. That is, you have the breath, the body, certain functional areas inside the body, the organs, the *jing*, the Qi, and the *shen*. Then you have the practices, the guidance of the master, the natural framework, and the training space. In which you start everything. So, unlike external alchemy, where plants, animals, minerals, and so on are used, the idea at the beginning is to regulate the physiology of the body.

Q: How do you regulate?

A: Well, first of all, it heavily relies on the idea of flow. Circuit of... flow circuit and holistic. Practically, the internal organs are connected to each other and are reflections of the five elements/main internal organs, the five: kidneys, liver, heart, stomach, lungs, and then back to kidneys. By retraining this circuit, again and again and again, a generative circuit, by the way, one organ nourishes the other.

Q: Yes, but how do you make it flow...

A: There are specific methods of internal alchemy. I don't want to detail them now, but the

practitioner... It's working with the mind and with the sensory part, rather the parasympathetic, not the sympathetic, and with the extrasensory abilities at the level of the hands, the palms.

Q: More directly put, the thought, working with the thought?

A: Well, where the attention goes, the energy goes. This principle is simple and everyone agrees with it. The problem is to keep the thought there, to keep the attention and to know when to switch from attention to intention and from intention to attention.

Q: What is the difference between attention and intention?

A: Well, attention is like being present in a space, intention is when you have a focal point in that space. So, when I say "attention - let's say - inside the body," it's inside the body, that's it. There isn't one part of the inside of the body more important than the other. But when you say "now attention at the level of the liver," you remain with the attention... you are inside the body, you don't leave the body, obviously. You remain there, present, but you add a focal point to that field you are attentive to. The Chinese have a *nian li* and a *yinian* . *Nian li* is the field, or volume, or area you are attentive to, and *yinian* is the intention. It's the focal point that gives center to your intention. Another example. If I say "attention on the breath now" – you basically place all your thoughts on a mechanical and physical respiratory process. You are attentive to the breathing. You don't intervene, you don't modify it. You just remind yourself that you are breathing. When I say "and now intention at the level of the tip of the nose," in a way, you forget that your attention was on the breath, but still, the breath is still the object of your attention, but you add an intention, you add a focal point there, a *yinian*.

Q: What is the power of thought relative to these notions, attention and intention? Is there a power of thought?

A: Yes. Well, the way you can modulate these thoughts, the way you can switch from intention to attention, from *yinian* to *nian li*. All these things are objects and phases and modulations of

thoughts. The brain is the organ that does this work. There are people who are very good, for example, at the attention part, they are attentive. You put them for 50 minutes to be attentive to a lesson, they are attentive. But if you give them a point of focus, just for ten seconds, they can't focus. On the other hand, there are many people good at focusing. But, if you give them a longer interval to be attentive to something, they can't. And, as a side note, high-performance attention has prolonged time as a characteristic. High-performance intention has a point as small as possible as a characteristic, which is the object of that focus. So, you can't say you have a solid intention if you are attentive to a thing that occupies, I don't know, an entire building. Furthermore, you can't say you have very good attention if you can't maintain it for at least half an hour, an hour. So, the performance criteria for intention and for attention are different. For attention it's time, for intention it's the smallest possible space.

Q: What is the goal of the internal alchemy practitioner?

A: Well, I've said this... with the goal, about twice so far. The first goal is to... well, there are the *ming* practices, which are for health, let's say, and which pertain to life, and there are the *xing* practices, which pertain to what is before birth and after death, rather. And these points of transition, birth and death. In other words, the goal, a very important goal, but not the most important – I always add, it's important, but it's not the most important – is the health of the physical body and, of course, of the psyche, the emotions and so on, harmony, but the most important is... the most important is the spiritual part.

Q: What does the spiritual part mean?

A: For me it might mean one thing, for you, something, for a listener, something else, for a reader, something else.

Q: Ok, let me ask the question differently: is there life after death?

A: Yes. There is something that seems to transcend the body. The physical body, we are very attached to... we identify with the physical body, so we put the equal sign between the self, the one in this body, and my body. So, it's like saying the driver is equal to the car he is driving. They are two totally different things. The driver is the driver and has a life before and after getting in the automobile, independent of the automobile. And he can drive several automobiles... successively, and the automobile is the automobile. So, that something, the driver, which transcends the physical body, which the Daoists consider illusory, alongside this material reality, which the Daoists consider illusory, that something pertains to the domain of the *shen* and the *ling*.

Q: In Romanian?

A: Well *shen* is awareness and *ling* is spirit. I can't say awareness in Romanian.

Q: Consciousness?

A: No, "conștiență" is not good. Awareness means to perceive in the present, as directly as possible, something that is not accessible to you through the sense organs. This is beyond the sense organs, beyond sensations and sensory things. That is awareness. We don't have a word in Romanian for awareness. That's the problem of the Romanian language.

Q: And we can't find one?

A: Well it's not "conștiență", it's not "conștiință" either, that's consciousness. "Conștiență" is when you are awake, when you are conscious. But awareness is more than that. Awareness is that state of awakening, that state of, how should I say...

Q: We use "iluminare" (illumination/enlightenment) abusively.

A: No. It's close to illumination. It's not quite illumination, because for illumination you need that *shenguang* ["spiritual illumination", in Chinese], with which you are probably familiar.

Q: Or we resort to phrases like "subtle consciousness"...

A: It's not consciousness. I would call it, rather... it's a function of that superior mental, that transpersonal mental, the spiritual mental. Some call it higher self or "the superior self". Others call it "something that transcends the ego", others call it "illumination", others call it... I don't even know, "light". Usually they are things related to light and awakening. So, everything related to awakening and light, awakening and light are very correlated, it's around there. Now, I always do, when I talk about *shen* and *ling*, I do it deductively. So, I link the concepts deductively. And we say it in the following way: "we have a man who is asleep and a man who is awake. The awareness state of the awake one is clearly superior to the one who is asleep. In other words: if inside that room, where the two are, a change, a transformation takes place, in that space, the one who is asleep does not perceive it, is not necessarily influenced by that transformation, does not collect any kind of sensation, does not perceive that transformation, therefore does not memorize it, so, for him, it does not exist.

Q: But in the sleep state, aren't there still instruments with which one can perceive? Starting with cold...

A: No. The sleep state is a state of paralysis, otherwise we couldn't sleep. It's a semi-paralysis. If we didn't temporarily paralyze...

Q: But a noise can wake us up, or we are cold and we put the blanket on us...

A: That's something else, when you are awakened. But you are no longer sleeping. In that moment you are no longer sleeping. It can no longer be said that you are sleeping. And then you

transition into the waking state. The waking state, so, any movement of the physical body, any movement of the physical body, during sleep, switches you into the waking state. That you don't remember it, that's another thing. Including dreaming. Dreaming already takes you out. It's no longer sleep. That's why there is this difference: sleep with dreams, sleep without dreams. Different things. Dreams are... it's that state through which you have access to the sleep state, if you remember, after you wake up, the two memories unite. The sleep memory with the waking memory. And this is another aspect, memory, it's the place where we store sensations and perceptions. And in this memory, some connections can be made, two spaces, two states can be linked, usually bistable, polar things. Ok, and now let's go further. Let's say that this man, who is aware, we compare him with the man who is awake. Let's say this aware man... let's use a word in Romanian, for "super-awake", let's call it that... this super-awake man begins to see things and perceive things in the same space, in the same reality, in addition, even compared to the man who has his eyes open, awake. Understand? So, compared to the man who is super-awake, the man we call awake is, in fact, asleep. Because he does not collect information from beyond reality, from the non-material reality, from the reality that transcends the 3D, the physical, material part, understand? That's roughly the comparison and that's roughly awareness.

Q: What happens to us after we die?

A: Well, I don't know that, because I haven't been (laughs), I haven't passed through...

Q: What is the practitioner of internal alchemy preparing for?

A: I only know this, that for a normal person, you have only one chance to make the transition correctly. Only one chance. So, you can't die twice. There are rare cases where one dies twice. Or you have a near-death experience, you escape and then... rare cases, right? Cases like Jesus, or other masters I know. Even Liping, had things like that, if you read his book. So, we, normal people, even normal practitioners, have only one chance to make the correct transition... from having a physical body, to no longer having that physical body.

Q: So, we have to die correctly?

A: One could say that there is a medicine of death, there is a prophylaxis of correct death, there is a training for that correct death, so, just as you maintain your life, your body, hygiene, I don't know what, there are also things you must do for that moment, of transition. Just as there are things the mother must do before giving birth to you, before you are born.

Q: How do these searches, the care for the body and for health in this life, reconcile with the post-mortem searches... the searches concerning the afterlife. How does this practice reconcile with ordinary life, whether as an employee or as an entrepreneur? What is the connection with society, with practice on one hand and with society on the other.

A: They are connected, certainly yes.

Q: They are connected. Are there forbidden things? Is money a problem?

A: No, no, no. On the contrary. Daoists are recognized as being a kind of aristocrats. Meaning this Daoism and especially alchemy, Neidan, was not for the underprivileged. You had to have a certain social status, to put your financial house in order and then you started internal alchemy and other such things.

Q: Good, so, you don't have to be poor. You don't have to swear, somehow....

A: No, it is not the ascetic path. No. On the contrary, I would say.

Q: But, among spiritual seekers there are internal alchemists, external alchemists, yogis, monks from various denominations or religions. And they have a different attitude towards money, towards wealth, towards society. Can one make a kind of, let's say, comparison? Just as people have political options, they can be socialists, they can be liberals, libertarians, conservatives. Can

one make... between the chosen spiritual paths and the chosen political paths, can one draw parallels, comparisons?

A: Of course one can...

Q: ...these religions of salvation, the religions...

A: Daoists are on the right, analogically speaking... I would say that Daoists are very pragmatic and on the right and Buddhists, let's say, would be more on the left, more with compassion, more with helping...

Q: Christians?

A: Christians are also on the left, still on the left. That's how I perceive them.

Q: What would a libertarian be, in the practice area?

A: Well, the libertarian is already a practitioner, no matter from which spiritual path, who has reached a certain level and you can't really brainwash him anymore. It's hard to brainwash him. That's the libertarian.

Q: If we pay taxes, doesn't he still have a duty towards this world?

A: He does, but he arrogates them and exercises them pragmatically. He is not the slave of the system, but the system works for him. Understand? And these taxes, they can bankrupt you, or they can bring you, if you make the correct deductions, a car, for free, for example. It depends how... you know, taxes in themselves are not good or bad. The way you optimize yourself fiscally can turn taxes into something good or bad.

Q: What is the practitioner of internal alchemy indebted to, towards society?

A: Well, first of all, not to burden the system, meaning to take care of himself and not to burden the health system, the social assistance system, and so on. It is a path that teaches you to be self-reliant, meaning to be able to rely only on yourself. That is very important. I haven't seen this approach elsewhere. If I do a quick inventory, other spiritual paths do not have this reporting. One – and two, they have a duty towards the family. The respective ancestors, meaning grandparents, parents, I don't know what, and the masters. So ancestors in both senses. And, of course, descendants. So, for them, the family is almost... how should I say, their connection to this existentiality in a physical body. They, for example, when they go to a cemetery, it's as if they must cleanse themselves physically, spiritually; their thoughts, their words, cleanse them, be silent for a period before coming to the cemetery. Because they are going to the ancestors. The ancestors being almost more important than the gods in other religions. Why? Because without those ancestors you would not exist today, in this body. Without their effort, without their suffering, without their sacrifice. And this, from my point of view, is typical, unique, and very... Daoist, I would say.

Q: Good, I understand that the practitioner is somewhat independent, relies on himself, of course, there is help, there is the inheritance, inheritances of all kinds, received from ancestors. But, is Daoism a religion?

A: Well, in the way I practice it, no. But, in China, yes, it is a religion. My religion is... I am Christian Orthodox. But... so there is a ritualistic part. What does... let's go a bit to etymology, like this. For me, religion means a spiritual path that has an institution attached to it, which has, in turn, some rules, some rites, some hierarchies, there are some jobs, in all this, there is real estate there, meaning temples, churches, domains, monasteries, very earthly things, by the way. So, that is a religion. And we in Romania feel this religious part fully, as an institution, especially after the Revolution. I saw that our church is very pragmatic, from a real estate point of view, and it's very good that it is so.

Q: Why is it good?

A: Because it is the property of that cult. You can't have the communist state come, 50 years, mess with those properties and after communism passes, pretend you forgot that... "wait, those belonged to the church". What is not ok, however, is to have more, to build more churches than schools and hospitals. That is no longer ok. But to give them back to those entitled to use them, that's ok. There are also those absurd things, where in a former Catholic church, these Christian Orthodox things were held. Well, if they belonged to the Catholics, they must be given back to the Catholics, because they built them. They put money there, through their effort they were made. So, religion, from this point of view – Daoist – exists. You know that Daoists were very good officials. An institution with hierarchies, with rites, rituals, even if sometimes emptied of content, just external, for the eyes of the world, where the congregation, the community gathers and attends and remembers that there is a community and a religion and an institution. Good. They usually take place in monasteries. And there is usually a priest who supports them. Good, I am not interested in this ritualistic, religious part of Daoism.

Q: You talk a lot about Daoism, about Daoist practices, but why do you say you are Christian Orthodox?

A: Well, I was baptized Christian Orthodox, I was born into a Christian Orthodox family, I baptized my children and got married and went through all these ritual things...

Q: But isn't it like a social duty?

A: No. I consider it is not. You can switch from one denomination to another very quickly, meaning I could have switched to...

Q: But you don't think you did it out of a social obligation?

A: No. I really believe you are not born randomly into a certain area of the globe, this thing is not random, the place of birth. The family and the faith of that family you are born into are not random things, and it would be good not to change them. From my point of view. It might be limited thinking, but for me, in my value system, these things are about *yuan*, about origin, the original part, the part that comes from the ancestors and that you don't want to change...

Q: But it's a way of interpreting the local religion through a Chinese lens.

A: No, why? Well, okay, fine, but maybe it's not the other way around too (laughs)? I mean, why only in one direction?

Q: Have you spoken with an Orthodox Christian priest about...?

A: I don't have a spiritual father. I will have one, but not yet. I'm thinking about someone...

Q: How do you think he would view your trips to Asia and your practices and all the experiences with Yoga and...

A: If they have altered this Orthodox Christian part?

Q: I'm not talking about that. Simply, what do you think the perspective of a spiritual father from here would be?

A: Ah, well, I've spoken from a distance like this with priests, spiritual fathers, monks, telling them what I do and what I've done and where I go. And there are some who are closed-minded, obtuse, who go off the deep end, that's the word. They start explaining to me that I'm going to burn in hell and Satan and all that... and that I'm a sinner and I don't know what, a heretic. This type is about

80 percent. But there is a 20 percent who are very okay. They say, "Man, if that's how you can know yourself better, by going there, very okay, no problem. If you think this thing helps you, do it! Especially since you haven't renounced your ancestral faith, you haven't deserted, so to speak, do it!" So, there are 20 percent of these people you can talk to, intelligent...

Q: Are they so many, or so few?

A: I think they are many. 20 percent is a good percentage. It was worse before, at least in those days, if you said in church that you do Yoga, goodbye. Maybe you found one in a hundred who wouldn't go into that other discourse. Now, 20 percent is okay, it's fine. Well, Yoga doesn't represent any great danger anymore, so to speak, after the scandals that happened, but the percentage is good, I say. One in five.

Q: Good, we've talked about dogmas, heresies, attitudes that can be interpreted as heresies; is there also in rural or urban folklore, because there's a lot of talk about energy, is there also the notion of energetic vampirism, or miraculous healings. What is this "energy"?

A: You know how it is, we accept Christian exorcism rites, which from my point of view are nothing but pure Qi phenomena. On the meridians, nothing else. So if you want to look at it scientifically, as scientifically as possible, if you want to look at an exorcism ritual in a purely technical way, it is nothing but a transition, a transformation, a regularization of the meridians. With a slight clearing at the *shen* level, slight, not very big. At the awareness level. So, we accept that, exorcism is real, right? So, when the priest comes with that water and sprinkles it on them and they start talking and making grunting noises, that's real, we accept that.

Q: Can any priest do this?

A: Well, exactly, not any priest can do this. Why do exorcisms only happen at certain monasteries,

with certain priests who "have the spirit"?

Q: But isn't there also a staging, a dramaturgy? Doesn't the possessed person get into the role?

A: I don't think so. There are also often the same little old ladies who go there and grunt like that, fine. There are scenarios like that too, but we set them aside. We take only the authentic cases of exorcism and I believe they exist. They are not just fakers.

Q: And energetic vampirism?

A: Well, that is nothing but a phenomenon related to the auric form. The circle, that egg of Qi that surrounds you. The more whole and symmetrical that egg is, the more impenetrable you are. So you have a better defense system. The more deformed that egg surrounding the physical body is, with breaks, with holes, the less defended it is. The one who does vampirism does nothing but find a vulnerable point in the other and feed a little (laughs).

Q: And other superstitions or popular beliefs? The evil eye, what would the evil eye be in an alchemical interpretation?

A: First of all, "evil eye" [deochi] has to do with the eye [ochi]. The one who casts the evil eye must look very intensely at someone and say, "how beautiful you are!" and praise them. So, the evil eye is not necessarily something negative, you understand? It's just that this act of looking is so intense, and the one who is looked at is so vulnerable, that the one who is praising them is actually feeding on the other's energy. From the other's resources, from the resources of the praised one. And, as a result, what do you do? Which is... what you have to do afterwards... let's also see how you cure the evil eye. You put a glass of water, you say a prayer, you impregnate that water with positive thoughts and you start counting matches. So, we have water, we have fire, and we have wood. Wood feeds fire and water puts out fire. And fire is about looking, it's about "to look". So,

practically, with that counting, you light a fire, you count, then you light the next matchstick, and you count and say the prayer, then you throw it, when the match gets to the end, so you don't burn your fingers, you throw it in the water, the next matchstick, you say the prayer again, light it and so on, ten times, until the evil eye passes. And, would you believe it, in nine cases out of ten this thing actually works.

Q: So, again, an alchemical interpretation for the folk incantations.

A: But there are many. If you look in folklore, for example... "to die of a bad heart" or "bad blood". Blood and the color red, in Romanian folk tradition, are very well represented, very well represented. Now, "bad heart" and "bad blood" mean exactly that. That the circulatory part, the flow, the current, is blocked. In other words, there is a person who cannot forgive another person. And at that moment there is no flow. And when there is no more flow, disease appears, dis-ease , the part of illness, of blockage appears. That is, for example, my interpretation. Or, another expression, we also have "he's gone with the raft" [he's crazy]. So, water is in excess, wood is deficient. There is an imbalance on this part, on this forbidden water-wood transition. In other words, the wood doesn't have roots in the earth to be able to grow nourished by water. It is much too small. And then, of course, this is usually said about people who are crazy, "he's gone with the raft."

Q: That is, the wood part, which means life, is not fixed in the earth, has an excess of water...

A: It has no roots and there are far too many thoughts, far too many ideas, the ground is far too unstable. And then, the person is "gone with the raft." And it's no coincidence that they are also called "lunatic." The moon is Yin, water is also Yin, they are close. So, this, again, if you look from an alchemical point of view, there is a kernel of truth there too.

Q: Good, let's end here. The discussions could continue for a long time, with examples...

A: Ah, there's one more thing. When someone dies, you have to light a candle, but would you believe it, you don't light it at the abdomen, nor at the feet, nor at the shoulders, where must you light it? On the crown of the dead person's head. So it has to do again with that pathway, *Tianmu xue* and with the points on the upper part of the head. From an alchemical point of view, I think it has to do with exiting the body through the proper area. People die, normally, by the Qi dissipating, the Qi and this non-physical structure exiting the body through the skin, through the pores. Which is not very fortunate. Ideally, you should exit through an area in the head.

Q: More precisely?

A: *Baihui* , *Dingmen*.

Q: *Bai Hui* is on the crown...

A: ...*Dingmen is the fontanelle*. In babies it's the fontanelle, so, that point that closes, it's in front of *Baihui*. *Dingmen* is at the level of the temples, in the plane of the temples, and *Baihui* is in the plane of the ears. If you put your fingers, palms, thumbs on your ears and your index finger up on the crown of your head, you get *Baihui*. If you put your thumbs on your temples and your index finger, likewise, on this central line on the head, you get *Dingmen*. This, again, is pure internal alchemy, Neidan, it can be interpreted that way.

Q: Good, let's end the discussion on this topic here. Let's return a bit to the biographical part. Talk a bit about your teachers, Liping and Jiang.

A: Well no, so, Jiang is the master, Liping is the professor.

Q: What is the difference between them?

A: Well, there are four grades, I think I've mentioned the grades of collaboration with them before: visitor, student, disciple, successor. You can only have a master from the disciple level up. If you are a student, then for you he is not a master, he is a professor. And he has no obligation towards you, you are not part of his family. You just pay some money in exchange for teaching. Period. When the teaching is over, you go home, you practice, but he has no kind of obligation towards you. Liping is my professor, meaning I go and learn from him for a set fee, the teaching periods well established, in a study group, and I learn a method, I practice a method, this method of immortality and after that, there is also the technique of the secret of the golden flower, "secret of the golden flower" and a few *ming* practices, that one with walking, the trees and so on, *pingheng gong*... which you find in trivial Qigong courses. You don't have to go to Liping to learn these things. The others are fine, they are more refined. Now, with Master Jiang, he is my master, I was formally accepted as a disciple in 2007, at the beginning, not only by him, but also by the Grand Master, by Jiang's master. A Buddhist monk. So, what's the difference? The difference is that with Jiang it's a slightly closer collaboration. There, the disciple must implement the concept of "serving" very well, so, he must serve his master, and the master must ensure that his disciple is successful in practice. In other words, the disciple's success is the master's success, the disciple's failure is the master's failure. That's pretty much the connection. In the student-teacher relationship, *xuesheng-laoshi*, this connection does not exist. The teacher only has to ensure that he teaches correctly what he has to teach. And the student must ensure that he practices correctly what he has to practice and that he takes home the transmitted practice correctly. Now, with Master Jiang I have to go periodically, once every 90 days. That is another particularity, in any relationship with a master there must be a periodic, regular visit. Of course, it is an investment of time, energy and money, not least, quite significant, but only this way can the course of practice be adjusted so that it is safe and efficient. With these periodic visits. Of course, there is a periodicity with Liping too. Now for me the periodicity is about once every two years. A retreat like that with Liping. Liping is Daoist, Longmen pai, "Dragon Gate" school, the sect which I understand is the most representative, it's the majority in Daoism in China today, this Longmen pai, and Shifu Jiang is a Buddhist Shaolin. The sect is Yijin jing, which goes back to Damo, Bodhidharma. He is the 83rd generation, Jiang. Liping is the 18th generation and if I remember correctly, it goes back to Lü Dongbin. Lü Dongbin or Wang Chunyang, I'm not sure anymore. We have to check a bit, to read. So, that would be the difference between the two.

Q: And will you have a lifelong connection with them?

A: Ah, no. As a disciple, if you want to finish, if you want to leave a school, you can leave a school. You go, you tell the master you want to leave and at that moment the master-disciple relationship ceases. And there is another rule, that you are not allowed to be a disciple in two schools simultaneously. You can be a student in several schools simultaneously. But a disciple, in only one school, at a given time.

Q: What are your plans for the future? You and your wife, who also practices. How do you see yourself in 10-15 years as a practitioner?

A: For now, we are raising our children. Our practice must take this constraint into account, so to speak, the children. They are the priority, at the moment. We developed ourselves until the children appeared, from this point of view. Now practice is in a secondary plane, let's say. But, after the children grow up, we will resume and bring practice, both of us, to the foreground. That's the practice part. The transmission part... I have received permission to transmit both Liping's teachings and Jiang's teachings. And this is something that I enjoy, for example. I feel fulfilled when I do this. And I will continue to do it.

Q: And socially, how do you think people like you, practitioners, can influence society and the administration, let's say, the political system? For the better.

A: Well, you know, like any approach, you know how it is, "if you want to change the world, change yourself first." If you want to change the world for the better, start with yourself.

Q: And after that?

A: Well, first of all, with yourself is a lifetime project. It is a rather lengthy process. We are all

perfectible, not perfect, at any moment of our lives. For example, through this teaching part, the fact that I teach others and give them the method, it's a shift, it's a transformation at a social level that is quite large. So far I have transmitted the method to over 300 people, in the last eight, nine years. 300 people. Well, 300 people is something. I've had people who were alcoholics, were drug-addicts. These people transformed. They are no longer a problem. Sick people, who solved their problems. So, the transformations are quite major.

Q: Are there practitioners, like you, in the administration, in politics?

A: Yes, there are, there are. From everywhere, from all fields. And entrepreneurs, and from the private sector, and public, judges and all sorts. So, no...

Q: Does the future of the country somehow depend on them? Can they have a say?

A: I don't know if the problem should be put like that, but I know that if someone were to become an important leader, with decision-making power and knew these principles, Yin, Yang, Daoist and so on, I think they would lead much better than those now, those who don't have these principles.

Q: But couldn't power and money corrupt them?

A: Well, wait a minute. Power and money can corrupt even the masters. Sure they can, so, power, money and women, because these are the three things – power, money and women, are the three factors that can corrupt. And in the case of women – power, money and men (laughs). Yes, they can corrupt, but that doesn't mean... so, these factors of corruption are irrelevant to "man, whether he is or isn't Daoist, is or isn't a practitioner, is or isn't Christian." No. Corruption has nothing to do with the fact that he would be a much better leader if he knew these things.

Q: Leader or administrator?

A: Both leader and administrator. Because Daoism covers all aspects. Both the aspects of emperor and the aspect of governor... and the aspect of the army. So, all three. In fact, in Daoism, there are many metaphors of this kind. Military, court, emperors, I don't know what...

Q: Relating both to society and to the human body.

A: Exactly. The human body is described, for example, with notions like emperor, governor, army, rivers, mountains, regions, territories, debits, taxes, credits – things like that. Yes, sure.

(End of dialogues)

A Spiritual Seeker from Romania

The Formative Years – From Sci-Fi Readings to Internal Alchemy

This article outlines a brief biographical journey of a spiritual seeker from Romania, starting from the moment he discovered the need to engage in a spiritual quest until around the mid-2010s. The seeker, whom I will refer to as G., first became interested in self-discovery—specifically, his role and place on Earth—during his school years, spurred by reading Frank Herbert's classic science fiction novel, *Dune*. The novel explores themes of spiritual initiation and maturation, and the story is rich with mystical elements. Later, he engaged in Yoga practice and eventually focused on two forms of Qi practice: Internal Alchemy (Neidan) and techniques related to the Yijin jing school.

The necessary information for this study was gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews with G., supplemented by an interview with his wife, who is also a Qigong practitioner. The total recorded interview time amounts to approximately 420 minutes, conducted between 2012 and 2014. In addition to the interviews, my direct participation as a translator and beginner practitioner during three therapy and practice trips organized by G. in China (2009, 2013, and 2015) proved invaluable.

Point Zero

G. began his connection with Chinese Qigong practices in 1997. Prior to that, he had practiced Yoga for nine years. Starting in 1997, he traveled to China numerous times to learn Qigong, whereas his interest in Yoga had never taken him to India.

Born in 1977, G. was 16 years old when he read *Dune* and realized the importance of spiritual

initiation and the need for personal transformation. In the book, the main character, a teenager named Paul, undergoes physical and mental training that includes ingesting a substance called "the spice." Paul experiences an initiation that opens him to a new reality, one he had never encountered before. Through reading the novel, G. not only realized the necessity of spiritual training but also became aware that people typically use only a small portion of their brain's potential. Thus, he decided to seek the expansion or even the full realization of this potential.

Consequently, G. began searching for practices that resembled the training procedures in *Dune*. These practices, however, also included ingesting "the spice" (a possible analogy for the alchemical pill) or accessing resources used in internal alchemy, as G. later speculated.

Even before reading *Dune* and becoming aware of structured training methods, G. had discovered an early predisposition for contemplation. The windows of his home overlooked the F. mountains, and he enjoyed sitting and contemplating, often finding himself in a kind of spiritual "receptivity." However, he had no innate abilities of the kind associated with parapsychology and never experienced special states of consciousness. On the contrary, his health was not particularly robust.

Not least, G. mentions that growing up in an atheistic society where religion was not taught in schools, he received no systematic religious education. His parents were not pious and did not attend church. Only his maternal grandmother provided some connection to religion. Between the ages of four and six, before starting primary school, his grandmother read from the Bible to him and his siblings instead of bedtime stories. Nevertheless, even as a child, he did not feel he believed in God nor questioned God's existence. As he states, God was a somewhat abstract figure.

Even after he began reading science fiction, G. did not connect his grandmother's religious stories with the message of *Dune*. Rather, he came to believe in the existence of God during his Yoga period.

Another major factor was his physical condition. He began practicing Yoga to improve his health and body mobility, becoming vegetarian and avoiding tobacco, alcohol, and coffee throughout this time.

Shortly after reading *Dune*, he began reading books on Yoga, the most important being a work by Paul Brunton translated into Romanian. This book deepened his interest in a new level of reality—one beyond ordinary visual perception. As G. emphasizes, he was confident that such a reality existed, and knowing it was linked to disciplined practice. However, it was not merely an intellectual understanding but a feeling of familiarity offered by spiritual practice—the sense of belonging to that realm since the beginning of time.

This intuition gave G. a strong sense of certainty, though he generally considers himself a skeptic. A new realm ready for exploration opened before him, despite any doubts and skepticism produced by his rational mind.

After practicing Yoga, G. reread Dune and felt that his experiences up to that point aligned with the episode in the book where the worm and the man become one. However, G. abandoned science fiction readings, choosing instead works on personal development, leadership, direct marketing, Daoist practices, and New Age spirituality.

Yoga

After first practicing Yoga in his hometown, C., in 1993, G. moved to S. the following year and then to Bucharest in 1995. There, he enrolled in the "Y." Yoga school for nine years. Founded by V., the school had the appearance of a religious cult and, besides fundamental Yoga elements, promoted astrology, free love, and seminal retention. In defiance of the law and likely disturbing certain political interests, the founder was eventually arrested and tried.

Despite these issues, G.'s main objections to V. had less to do with the tabloid aspects of his

biography and more with the fact that he did not represent a specific tradition nor was part of a clear spiritual lineage. Instead, V. seemed a self-taught guru who creatively and intuitively combined teachings and techniques from various schools, which he then transmitted in new, eclectic forms to his students. Nevertheless, he provided an excellent framework for seeking and practicing in ashrams and camps he organized. This helped G. acquire fundamental concepts of Hatha Yoga: postures, relaxation and breathing techniques, seated meditation practice, and, of course, specialized vocabulary.

After this stage, G. would choose internal alchemy, but the transition was neither direct nor smooth. At one point, he decided to leave the Yoga school, despite the founder's clearly expressed possessiveness. G. justified his decision by stating that the discussions and practices had shifted away from Yoga, and a certain stagnation had set in, felt by some adherents who had been there for over five years. What G. sought was development and continuity in practice—an authentic, structured practice capable of producing measurable effects and results. He was eager to learn and experience new things, expand his knowledge related to practice, and compare all these new things with what he had learned before.

Thus, after an eight-month break, he began attending Qigong classes in Bucharest and reading specialized literature, acquiring a new set of ideas, including the concept of "energy meridians," acupuncture points, and Qi. In his opinion, all these were part of a much more structured system.

However, as it turned out, his increased interest in Qi practice was all he gained at that time, as the Qigong classes there did not differ significantly from the Yoga classes he had attended before. Moreover, he discovered the same shortcomings he had once fled: sectarianism, manipulation, material motivations, competition for power in the "spiritual marketplace," monopolistic tendencies, and so on. Deeply disappointed, he decided to cease his spiritual searches in Romania and leave for Asia.

After making this decision, G. would meet four masters in the following years who were important for his development: Master Luo from Bangkok; the Magus from Java, Indonesia (whose European disciple, D., also taught in Romania); Shaolin Master Jiang; and the Daoist Wang Liping from the Longmen branch in China.

G. first went to Asia in 2004 to participate in a one-month training session with Master Luo in Bangkok. The group consisted of 30 participants, five of whom were from Romania. The training lasted about three hours daily—a form of training that G. describes as physically demanding, even painful, and yet quite inefficient. Nevertheless, Luo was the first master from whom G. learned about methods of "externalizing Qi" (*fa qi* 發氣) and through whom he had his first revelation, making Luo the master who initiated him. G. continued with this practice over several sessions but then pursued his search elsewhere, describing Luo's teachings as a Daoist-Buddhist fusion, with the school's emblem featuring the Taiji symbol combined with the Buddhist swastika.

From D., who happened to participate in one of these sessions in Bangkok, G. learned about D.'s master, the Magus from Java. D. called the master several times, hoping to receive permission to visit him, and eventually, permission was granted. The group was received for a short meeting, during which the Magus externalized Qi to the audience and demonstrated a form of treatment specific to acupuncture—without needles, using only Qi while activating points not found in standard medical manuals. However, when asked to provide a map of these points, the Magus refused, explaining that they must remain his mind's secret and arguing that there was a strictly particular compatibility between his Qi and these points.

Besides emitting Qi through his palms, the Magus also demonstrated a method of emitting Qi through the lower abdominal area, which felt like an electric current through the field where the internal alchemical pill is formed. But for G., the most interesting aspect of the demonstration was the master's ability to adjust the intensity of the Qi, increasing or decreasing it as needed. In

comparison, Master Luo could only start or stop the emission of Qi but never adjust its intensity. G. describes the Magus from Java as a practitioner of a form of internal alchemy that he himself called "internal practice" (Neigong), which was actually a Daoist practice path. Regarding the authenticity of the Magus's power, G. considers it credible, especially because the Magus was 70 years old but looked like a 50-year-old.

G. acquired three teachings from this master: First, not only are patients unique, but so are therapists, each working with their own map of acupuncture points and energy configurations, creating a unique and harmonious relationship between patient and healer. Second, after experiencing the existence of Qi for the first time through Luo, he then received generous demonstration and confirmation through the Magus from Java. Thus, he realized that Qi can be emitted not only through fingers but also through palms, the abdomen, or even the entire body. Third, not all disciples are what they claim to be. Already suspecting D. of acting as a kind of "spiritual matchmaker" for monetary gain (dating back to the visit to Luo), G. also observed that the Magus viewed the European as an annoying and even unacceptable character, a situation that contrasted sharply with D.'s claims of maintaining a close relationship with the Magus. In other words, it seems G. became increasingly aware of and disturbed by the existence of a veritable "Qi industry," with all its specific elements: marketing, relationship systems, consumer networks, informal commissions, and so on.

Encounter with Shaolin Practice

Despite growing distrust in D.'s credibility, G. still followed him to participate in another event: a public conference held in 2007 in Koh Samui (Thailand), featuring Shaolin Master Jiang Feng (deceased in 2016), a specialist in techniques related to the Yijin jing school. On this occasion, Jiang addressed G. directly and praised his performance. As G. recalls, he was part of a group of 20 people, 19 of whom were asked by the Master about their ailments. As the last one, he conversed with Jiang not about illnesses but about personal practice, asking how much time he had dedicated to practice so far. G. adds that the Master had the gift of easily seeing through people as if using a natural X-ray scanner, detecting internal dysfunctions, incipient ailments, but also seeing

the potential of the person to develop their Qi. On this occasion, Jiang conveyed an essential message to G.: to have a true master who belongs to a lineage and that he was prepared for this. This was precisely what G. had been seeking for so long. It is also G.'s conviction that when a disciple seeks diligently, a favorable context will appear, and they will meet their Master, who in turn offers appropriate signals. And this happened to G. when Master Jiang called him to become his disciple. As a result, G., along with his wife and several Romanians who came for diagnosis and treatment, followed Jiang to China.

Internal Alchemy

Later, in the same year 2007, after working in China with Master Jiang, D.'s instructor, an advanced Chinese practitioner called "Professor Wang," suggested that he take part in a workshop held by none other than the leader of the Longmen Daoist branch, Wang Liping. Professor Wang himself was not a Qigong master, but a researcher and member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, specializing in social psychology. He also published a study on Master Wang Liping and his system of internal alchemy.

Joining Master Wang Liping and his students, the Romanian group later returned to China every three months, working both with him and with Jiang, thus respecting the "hundred-day rule," the time required for a well-practiced discipline to yield results, which also demands that the disciple return at this interval so that the master may evaluate him and possibly assign an advanced practice.

The first significant meditation retreat with Master Wang Liping took place in September 2008. G. came accompanied by his wife and six other Romanians, all former yogis. At that time, G. had not yet read the book about Wang Liping's training, known as *Opening the Dragon Gate: The Making of a Modern Taoist Wizard* by Chinese authors, translated into English by Thomas Cleary (1998); thus, he was not aware of the status and respect that Wang Liping actually enjoyed in the Daoist world. All he knew was that they were at a retreat led by a Chinese master, somewhere in the northeastern city called Dalian. For the two of them, the eight-day retreat, plus airfare, accommodation, and translation, cost around ten thousand euros. However, G. emphasized that this substantial investment—not only in money but also in time—motivated them all the more to

work diligently. In turn, Wang Liping praised G. and his fellow practitioners for their unexpectedly good level of physical preparation, achieved in reality after more than ten years of Yoga, to which they added several months of systematic preparation specifically for the retreat they were to attend with Wang Liping. For this reason, they were able to quickly reach a relatively advanced level of internal alchemy and soon experienced spontaneous bodily manifestations and Qi movements originating from the lower abdomen. G. explained: for these manifestations to occur, the energy meridians must be balanced and clear, and the practitioner must have sufficient Qi stored in the "cinnabar field." The body's movement does not come from muscles and bones but from that energetic field, which functions like a charged battery.

According to G.'s descriptions, what we call the "field" is not actually a surface, a focal point, or a physical organ, but a "functional area," a kind of seat of a function that produces and stores energy and which the practitioner must activate up to a certain level. Moreover, it possesses its own autonomous breathing, memory, and life. The retreats with Master Wang were held annually, either in China or in another country, at one point even in Romania: in 2011, a ten-day workshop was held in the resort town of Vatra Dornei. According to G., the 35 participants underwent an intensive training program lasting six to eight hours daily, just like during the retreats in China. It should be added that Wang Liping does not provide diagnoses or therapy. On the other hand, meetings with Jiang were held every three months until his passing (summer of 2016).

G. considers Wang Liping his teacher, not his master or spiritual guide, a role reserved in fact for Master Jiang, in whose school G. officially became a disciple (early 2007), with all the responsibilities that such a status entails. G. notes that one cannot devote body and soul to two schools or lineages, but must remain loyal to only one.

Present

After a long and rigorous period of training, G. is now an instructor of Qigong and internal alchemy. With Wang Liping's approval, he has frequently organized retreats in Romania, with both national and international participation. At the same time, he organized practice and therapy groups at the Xinglin Chinese Medicine Clinic in the city of Huangshan (Anhui province), until the death of Master Jiang. After 2016, continuity was maintained, the groups being received by Jiang's

successor, Dr. Wu Hongsheng, although not at the same clinic.

But what are the personal health benefits? G. says he has healed from all the ailments he suffered during adolescence. In 2013, he noted that he had never been hospitalized and had not taken a single sick leave day in more than 20 years, attributing it all to the practices. Good physical and mental health is one of the essential goals of internal alchemy. Then comes spiritual growth and preparation for a "correct" physical death.

G. also adds that a practitioner has the social duty not to burden the medical system, but to care for his own condition. This responsibility extends equally to one's ancestors, to one's masters, and to one's descendants. Regarding religious affiliation, G. considers himself Eastern Orthodox Christian: he was baptized, married in church, and his two children were also baptized. Nevertheless, G. does not declare interest in ritual aspects, whether Orthodox or Daoist. And his declared affiliation with the Orthodox faith does not exclude a critical attitude toward some of its social aspects: for example, the fact that more churches are built than schools, dogmatism, exclusivist and fundamentalist tendencies, etc.

Regarding some popular empirical beliefs and practices in Romania, G. interprets them through the framework of Daoist internal alchemy. Thus, he applies notions such as "Qi/blood blockage," *yin* and *yang*, "the five elements" (dynamic phases of matter, *wuxing*), etc., to phenomena like possession, "energetic vampirism," the evil eye, "evil heart," "bad blood," madness, and others. He also recalls the well-known custom of lighting a candle at the moment of someone's death, near the head area.

Conclusions

Three years after the last recorded interview, in September 2017, I returned with a set of written questions regarding four areas: (1) the objectives of practice; (2) the alchemical pill in internal practice and in external alchemy; (3) the master-disciple relationship; and (4) projections for the future.

Some of the resulting information has already been incorporated into this article. Regarding the objectives of practice, G.'s wife adds that each practitioner has their own goals and is unique in this sense. As one advances in practice, the initial goal becomes refined. In turn, G.

says that most people have very practical goals, such as: health, well-being, and longevity—terms connected to what Daoists call life/destiny (*ming*).

But more important than these is finding personal answers to questions about one's identity in this Cosmos: Who am I ? Where do I come from? Where am I going? These relate to the concept of "innate nature/character" (*xing*).

Developing his own representations of the "cinnabar field" (rendered in English, following Livia Kohn's choice, as *elixir field*), G. says that the resources within the human body can be seen as "ingredients," while breathing functions as a "fire" blown upon them, transforming them. For contrast, I add one of G.'s observations (noted by me in 2015), describing the "field," as represented in the Yijin jing school, as a function rather than a physically detectable surface or three-dimensional space, or as a spherical pill (about 1.5 cm in diameter) specific to Chinese medicine. Moreover, in external alchemy, actual pills made of plant, mineral, and even animal matter are used, which, once formed, may also be infused by the master with Qi to increase their potency. Even so, the "pill" (I recall the Chinese word *dan*) is also a metaphor for the procedure by which the Master "irrigates" certain acupoints with Qi.

For her part, G.'s wife never practiced Yijin jing, but she describes the "field" as an internal alchemy practitioner according to the traditional image of the alchemical tripod, with ventilation holes in the lid.

Regarding future projections, G. says that, thanks to practice, he hopes to be less affected by aging. He also wishes to write, produce audio-visual materials necessary for practice, and teach, guiding others, while at the same time remaining financially independent through personal investments. At present, his priority is raising his two children, above his practitioner career. Once the children have grown, spiritual practice will again become his main concern.

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